



The
Wildlife
Trusts



Our **Year** for *Wildlife* & *Climate*

The Wildlife Trusts' Impact Report
April 2023-March 2024

Sir David Attenborough, President Emeritus, after being awarded the Rothschild Medal, with Liz Bonnin, President; Craig Bennett, Chief Executive; and Duncan Ingram, Chair of The Wildlife Trusts



Fighting nature's corner

As we look back on another year, during which the country geared up for a General Election – and The Wildlife Trusts' supporters took to the streets to call for nature to step up the agenda – there have been many notable moments for The Wildlife Trusts as we rapidly progress towards the mid-point of our Strategy 2030.

Guiding all that we do and the decisions that we make, Strategy 2030 emboldens us to think and act bigger, better, more joined up, whilst helping us as a federated organisation to stay focused on our shared ambitions and concentrate our efforts on tackling the challenges that result in the greatest benefit for wildlife, people and climate.

Over the past few years, since the launch of Strategy 2030, we have moved at a great pace – testament to our dedicated and passionate staff who help us to progress with their innovation and expertise, our volunteers who give up their time to help us achieve our vision and the members and supporters who back our campaigns and help fund our vital work.

In the past 12 months alone, Cornwall Wildlife Trust announced the ambitious Tor to Shore project, linking nature restoration efforts on land and at sea; we launched *A Vision for the Return of Beavers to England and Wales*, making the case for returning beavers to the wild; we celebrated two significant land purchases, Skiddaw Forest in Cumbria – with thanks to support from Aviva and members of the public – and part of the Rothbury Estate in Northumberland; and were buoyed up at the wonderful turnout for the Restore Nature Now march where hundreds people attended with their Wildlife Trust, and gathered to call on all political parties to take action for nature ahead of the General Election, generating media coverage across multiple news outlets. These are just a few of the truly remarkable accomplishments and actions we have taken together. But of course, it's never enough.

Over the next five years we need to build on the strong foundations we've put in place to address the continued and intensified attacks on nature and help meet national and

global targets. The legally binding Environment Act demands a halt to species decline by the end of the decade and the restoration of our precious water bodies to their natural state. In light of recent disheartening revelations, such as water companies spilling record levels of sewage into our rivers and oceans, coupled with the impact of agricultural run-off, we know it will be incredibly difficult. The Global Biodiversity Framework targets – agreed to by the UK Government – are in many cases more ambitious. Enhancing green spaces; integrating wildlife in decision-making at every level; restoring 30% of all degraded ecosystems; conserving 30% of land, waters and seas; and minimising the impact of climate change are challenges facing a world in which the changes we need are currently happening far too slowly.

We have an important role to play in making these changes happen more rapidly. The Wildlife Trusts are developing the culture, skills and capabilities to work together ever more effectively for the good of wildlife. We're ready to scale up our efforts where needed, working across the UK and with international partners to tackle both local and global problems that impact wildlife.

If you are a member of a Wildlife Trust, a corporate partner, funder, major donor, member of staff or volunteer, thank you for your support. Your contribution, whether through time, expertise or funding, is helping us to fight nature's corner, tackle the climate crisis and protect our green and wild spaces.



Duncan Ingram
Chair of
The Wildlife Trusts



Craig Bennett
Chief Executive of
The Wildlife Trusts

© BRONN LLOYD-EDWARDS

© JONNY ADELSON

“I’m incredibly honoured to spend another year as the President of The Wildlife Trusts, and to continue to learn from so many inspirational people working with passion and integrity to protect the natural world.

Over the past 18 months I’ve had a wonderful time visiting more Wildlife Trusts across the British Isles, and I also had the opportunity to join leaders from across the federation on fact-finding visits to the Isle of Wight and the Netherlands. These gatherings were very special – a chance to connect and benefit from the supportive energy that the federation community brings, but also to share ideas and expertise, and foster new collaborations that can further bolster our efforts to bring wildlife back to the UK.

Other highlights for me include the opportunity to celebrate Sir David Attenborough as he received the Rothschild Medal this summer. A small group of us, proudly representing the federation, thanked him for his enduring support and for all that he does for nature. I was also proud to represent The Wildlife Trusts at the powerful Restore Nature Now march in June, where over 60,000 people, including more than 350 different organisations, gathered in London with the common goal of calling for nature’s recovery.

It’s been a truly remarkable year for the federation, you all continue to inspire me every day, and I look forward to supporting you in 2025.”

Liz Bonnin
President, The Wildlife Trusts



Key people and supporters

Patron HM King Charles III

President Liz Bonnin

Presidents Emeriti Sir David Attenborough
Simon King
Tony Juniper

Vice Presidents Dr Amir Khan
Iolo Williams
Gillian Burke
Prof Chris Baines
Nick Baker
Prof David Macdonald
Bill Oddie
Julian Pettifer
Sir Robert Worcester

Ambassadors Dr Mya-Rose Craig
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David Oakes
Sophie Pavelle
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Alison Steadman
Richard Walker
James McVey
Maddie Moate
Rhiane Fatinikun

Chair Duncan Ingram
Chief Executive Craig Bennett

We are grateful to all of our key supporters who provide their time, guidance and experience to The Wildlife Trusts. A huge thank you also to our ambassadors who champion our cause and promote the work of The Wildlife Trusts all year round. Here are just a few of the highlights from 2023/24:



RHIANE FATINIKUN

Rhiane is an outdoors advocate and community organiser. She also founded Black Girls Hike to challenge the stereotypes and lack of representation in the outdoor world.

Rhiane Fatinikun championed The Wildlife Trusts’ Big Wild Walk in September 2023, encouraging participants to create their own adventures outdoors and help raise funds for nature’s recovery.



DAVID OAKES

David is an actor, known for his appearances in Valhalla, Victoria and The Borgias, and his podcast Trees a Crowd, which celebrates the natural world.

David Oakes was the face of our engagement campaign 30 Days Wild in June 2023, hosting the annual Big Wild Quiz live on YouTube with fellow ambassador Sophie Pavelle. He also visited Kent Wildlife Trust to promote the wild bison project and Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust to learn about their work.



GILLIAN BURKE

Biologist and presenter Gillian is known for her work on BBC’s Spring, Autumn and Winterwatch, her passion for science and love of nature.

Gillian presented one of our Wild LIVE broadcasts on YouTube, which looked at the use of pesticides and how we can better support farmers to choose more nature-friendly methods.

Our **wild** year – highlights from across The Wildlife Trusts



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© FRIENDS OF UPPER WYE



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APRIL

MAY

JUNE

JULY

AUGUST

SEPTEMBER

OCTOBER

NOVEMBER

DECEMBER

JANUARY

FEBRUARY

MARCH

2023

2024

North Wales Wildlife Trust was the first to benefit from the Aviva partnership, which awarded £38 million to restore temperate rainforests. Having purchased Bryn Ifan in Caernarfon the Wildlife Trust has begun the process of sympathetic native planting alongside natural regeneration, to start to bring back our lost rainforests.

Cumbria Wildlife Trust received £300,000 from National Highways as part of the Network for Nature programme to restore damaged areas of peatland at Burns Beck Moss. Work to restore the river course and remove scrub will prevent carbon escaping back into the atmosphere and improve the experience of visitors to the nature reserve as wildlife returns.

The National Lottery Community Fund awarded £1.49 million to **Shropshire Wildlife Trust** and UpRising to co-deliver an innovative Environmental Leadership Programme. The initiative has so far supported 400 young people (aged 18-25) from underrepresented communities across the West Midlands to strengthen their connection to nature and encourage them to run nature-focused campaigns in their communities.

Homes for Hedgehogs, a county-wide campaign to raise awareness and reverse the decline of one of the UK's most beloved species, was launched by **Somerset Wildlife Trust**. The campaign aims to encourage people to make small changes to their gardens and green spaces to benefit hedgehogs, boost their declining numbers and help them thrive once again. Over 3,500 people have signed up to help.

Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust ran summer sessions for autistic children and their families. The *Engaging with Nature* project included the exploration of wild spaces and nature-based activities to promote the health benefits of spending time in nature. Michelle Webb, a parent, said the sessions had made the "easiest summer holiday" and her two children had "really enjoyed coming out, meeting people and making new friends".

As part of the redevelopment of West Bromwich high street, **Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust** planted wildflowers to provide a vital source of food for wildlife on this urban street, as well as bringing a touch of beauty to the area, helping the local community to experience nature on their doorstep. The Wildlife Trust also led guided seasonal walks for the visually impaired and local community groups.

Herefordshire and Radnorshire Wildlife Trusts worked in partnership to create a climate-resilient landscape within the River Wye catchment. Funding of £462,000 from the National Lottery Community Fund has helped the Trusts support local landowners in implementing nature-based solutions to prevent flooding and the resulting devastation experienced by farmers, businesses and residents.

The drinks were on **Norfolk Wildlife Trust** in November after the purchase of the Pleasure Boat Inn situated at Hickling Staithe. Located near to the popular Hickling Broad and Marshes nature reserve, the Trust hopes the acquisition will help attract new visitors to the area and create novel and fresh ways to introduce people to nature and the landscape of Hickling.

Sheffield & Rotherham Wildlife Trust reached a major fundraising target of £1.2 million to secure the purchase of Ughill Farm, an important site for curlews, lapwings and other nationally threatened wading birds that visit the moors to breed. Thanks to contributions from wildlife supporters, the local community and major funders, the Trust repaid a loan from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and took full ownership of the land.

The Wildlife Trusts joined forces with The National Trust and RSPB to pressure the UK Government to enshrine basic protection for nature on farms. The rules that protected rivers and hedgerows on farms came to an end on 31 December 2023, putting them at risk from excessive river pollution and the removal of vital hedgerows used by nesting birds. The campaign helped lead to their reinstatement in January 2024.

Manx Wildlife Trust created a Wilder School Award for primary schools, aiming to help Manx school children learn about wildlife while making their school grounds more wildlife-friendly. With a little bit of effort, they can be important habitats for wildlife in both rural and urban areas, creating a wildlife corridor. The scheme also encourages schools to survey the wildlife they find and share the data back to Manx Wildlife Trust.

Wildlife Trusts Wales launched an online e-action in partnership with WWF Cymru to help Welsh people share their thoughts on how land in Wales should be farmed in the future. The e-action helped ensure their views were heard by the Welsh Government as part of a consultation on the Sustainable Farming Scheme that aims to reward farmers for adopting sustainable food production methods.



47 independent charities
 3,600 dedicated employees
 38,000 passionate volunteers
 944,000 supportive members
One powerful movement.

We are The Wildlife Trusts.

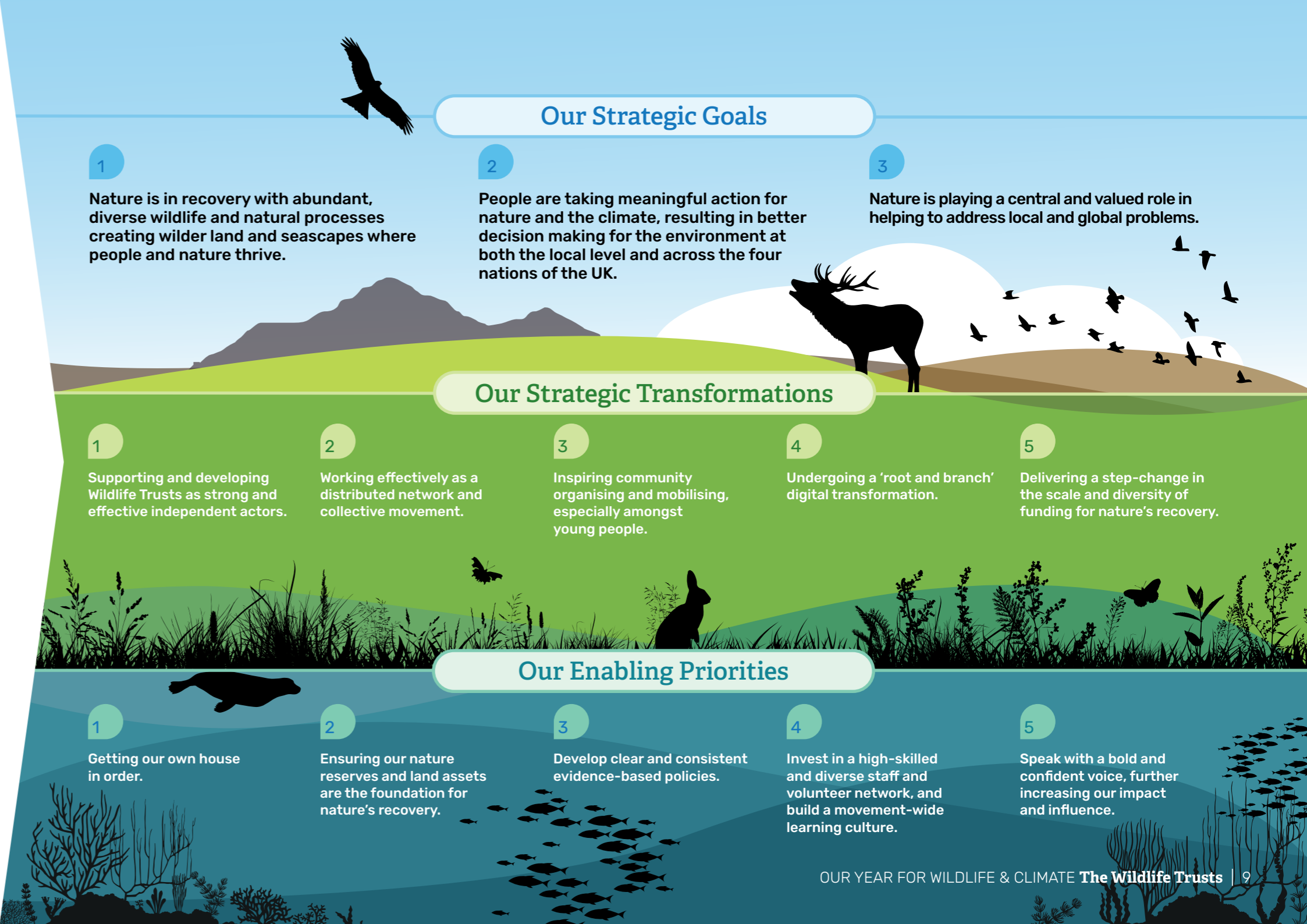
The Wildlife Trusts are a movement of place-based independent charities putting nature into recovery throughout the UK and its Crown Dependencies. Whether you are in England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, Isle of Man or Alderney, there's a Wildlife Trust working to bring wildlife back and empowering people to take meaningful action for nature where you live and work.

We manage over 2,600 nature reserves and 120 information centres, which attract over 15 million visitors every year. We host over 9,000 visits from schools, colleges, care homes and youth groups, and arrange 6,000 corporate volunteering days. We are local Wildlife Trusts, firmly rooted within our local communities and, along with our national charity, the Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts, are 47 charities standing side by side to campaign and advocate for nature on a regional, national and global scale. We are a growing movement, united by common goals and an ambition to put nature into recovery, reversing the grave decline of wildlife across the UK and tackling climate change.

Strategy 2030 is our shared vision of a thriving natural world and sets out how, as a collective, we are going to play our role in ensuring at least 30% of land and sea is protected and connected for nature by 2030.

Our five Strategic Transformations and five Enabling Priorities form the foundations that will enable us to realise our three Strategic Goals (see diagram on right). Throughout this report we have included stories and examples of how Wildlife Trusts are both collectively, and independently, making progress towards our shared objectives. Together, as a movement of people, charities, supporters and partners, we are securing a brighter and wilder future for our natural world.

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Our Strategic Goals

- 1 Nature is in recovery with abundant, diverse wildlife and natural processes creating wilder land and seascapes where people and nature thrive.
- 2 People are taking meaningful action for nature and the climate, resulting in better decision making for the environment at both the local level and across the four nations of the UK.
- 3 Nature is playing a central and valued role in helping to address local and global problems.

Our Strategic Transformations

- 1 Supporting and developing Wildlife Trusts as strong and effective independent actors.
- 2 Working effectively as a distributed network and collective movement.
- 3 Inspiring community organising and mobilising, especially amongst young people.
- 4 Undergoing a 'root and branch' digital transformation.
- 5 Delivering a step-change in the scale and diversity of funding for nature's recovery.

Our Enabling Priorities

- 1 Getting our own house in order.
- 2 Ensuring our nature reserves and land assets are the foundation for nature's recovery.
- 3 Develop clear and consistent evidence-based policies.
- 4 Invest in a high-skilled and diverse staff and volunteer network, and build a movement-wide learning culture.
- 5 Speak with a bold and confident voice, further increasing our impact and influence.



Enjoying and experiencing nature

© EVE + TOM PHOTOGRAPHY



Common lizard

© DANNY GREEN/2020VISION



A Wildlife Trust volunteer

© GAVIN DICKSON

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Local action, global impact

Supporting the delivery of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

The United Nations' (UN) 17 Sustainable Development Goals are a collection of interlinked objectives that act as a 'shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future'.

They represent an urgent and global call for action by all countries (both developed and emerging) to end poverty, improve health and education, reduce inequality and spur economic growth for all. A fundamental aspect of the Sustainable Development Goals, and a theme running throughout, is climate and nature. Without action on climate, nature suffers, and vice versa. And when nature suffers, we all suffer.

The work of The Wildlife Trusts directly supports the UN's global goals within the context of the UK, and they sit at the core of our Strategy 2030. Putting nature into recovery, encouraging and supporting people and communities to take meaningful action for the environment, and ensuring that nature is playing a central role in helping to address both local and global problems, is at the very heart of what we do.

Our vision of a thriving natural world, where wildlife and natural habitats are protected, in recovery, and playing a role in addressing the nature and climate crises, aligns with and directly supports progress towards six of the Sustainable Development Goals:



CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION

Our rivers, streams and seas are under attack, with greater action required from all UK governments and stakeholders. We are fighting to end water scarcity and river pollution, undertaking restoration work to improve the wildlife habitats impacted and providing nature-based solutions to solve issues such as flood and drought management which affect communities.



SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

We are engaging with local communities to support and inspire them to create more green spaces and improve access to nature. We work with local councils, leaders and other decision-makers to ensure that the protection of wildlife is at the forefront of urban development plans and part of the solution to a wide range of societal issues.



CLIMATE ACTION

We are taking meaningful action for nature and the climate, influencing government at a local, regional and country level. We are getting our 'own house in order', to make sure The Wildlife Trusts are making an authentic contribution to the climate emergency as land managers and energy users, including taking action to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2030 and adapt to the effects of climate change.



GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Evidence shows that a thriving, wildlife-rich environment benefits both physical and mental health. People with nature on their doorstep are more active, mentally resilient and have better all-round health. We are leading on nature-based health and well-being programmes, working with the NHS and other partners to place green social prescribing at the centre of the response to the growing physical and mental health crisis.



LIFE BELOW WATER

We have successfully campaigned for Highly Protected Marine Areas in England and are actively involved in the planning at sea debate, seeking to counter damaging activities, such as unsustainable fishing, trawling, development and pollution, which are harming marine life and impacting coastal areas and habitats. Working with other environmental charities, we have published a groundbreaking report that maps the UK's blue carbon.



LIFE ON LAND

We are making more space for nature in the UK, connecting habitats, restoring the abundance of nature and working with farmers, politicians and businesses to encourage investment in nature-based solutions. We are reintroducing missing keystone species to put nature into recovery at pace and at scale, and engaging directly with local communities impacted by this work to ensure they are informed and in support.

Links to the UN Sustainable Development Goals are indicated at the top of each of the Goal pages.



GOAL 1

Nature is in recovery

with abundant, diverse wildlife and natural processes creating wilder land and seascapes where people and nature thrive.

With one in six species under threat of extinction, urgent action is required to halt and reverse nature's decline. Across the UK, Wildlife Trusts are leading groundbreaking programmes for nature's recovery, leading efforts to turn around the fortunes of our depleted wildlife. From species reintroduction to purchasing more land for nature, advocating for tougher government action on rivers to working with landowners on caring for land in a more nature-friendly way – The Wildlife Trusts are creating lasting change.

CASE STUDY

Bringing native oysters back to Northern Ireland

Native oysters are set to flourish once more along the Atlantic coast with the creation of a new native oyster nursery at Glenarm Marina.

Native oysters were once abundant along the Glenarm coast up until the mid-1800s, but overfishing, disease, invasive species and pollution decimated the local population.

The restoration initiative, led by Ulster Wildlife, could see up to 800 million oyster larvae released into surrounding waters every year, allowing these ocean superheroes to bounce back from extinction, helping to boost biodiversity and reduce water pollution levels.

In May 2023, over 800 mature native oysters, sourced under licence from Loch Ryan in Scotland and screened for disease on arrival, were suspended in 30 purpose-built cages over the edges of the marina's pontoons. Ulster Wildlife recruited volunteers from the local area to help monitor the oysters, undertaking regular health checks to assess their growth rates.

This is Ulster Wildlife's second native oyster nursery, after opening the first in 2022 at Bangor Marina – a first for Northern Ireland. Through these efforts Ulster Wildlife hope to revive the species and bring them back to their former levels of abundance.



© BRIAN MORRISON

CASE STUDY

Unlocking Scotland's agricultural potential

A new report commissioned by the Scottish Wildlife Trust called attention to the transformative potential of nature-based solutions for Scottish farms and crofts.

The report (funded by Esmée Fairbairn Foundation) calls for a paradigm shift in farming policy to realise the Scottish Government's vision for Scotland to be a leader in sustainable and regenerative food production, and in doing so address the challenges of climate change, nature loss and economic uncertainties.

The report highlights nature-based solutions, which can aid farmers and land managers in mitigating climate change impacts by improving soil health, water retention and build resilience to wildfires, floods and heatwaves.

The report, launched in November 2023, also highlighted the need for a higher level of urgency and clarity to be injected into the development of farming policy so that all land managers have access to the information and support required to deliver the Scottish Government's Vision for Agriculture.



Highland cow

© BOB COYLE

CASE STUDY

Combating ash dieback in Devon

Ash dieback has devastated ash trees across Europe. Up to 80-90% of ash trees in the UK are predicted to be at risk; their death resulting in a monumental impact on our woodland habitats and the wildlife within them.

Devon Wildlife Trust is one of many Wildlife Trusts fighting back. Two years ago, they opened a specialist tree nursery and embarked on a mission to save our threatened and much-loved woodlands. Now, their work is starting to pay off. In December 2023, they planted the first trees to fill the gaps left by ash dieback.

5,000 native species trees have been grown at the nursery, based at the Trust's Meeth Quarry nature reserve, near Hatherleigh. The tree species being grown at the nursery include ash (from existing tree stocks shown to be resilient), oak, spindle, hazel, hawthorn, Devon whitebeam, rowan, crab apple and field maple. Each of these trees has been grown using seeds collected locally from land owned by Devon Wildlife Trust, the National Trust, Woodland Trust and private holdings.

The young trees will now be planted across Devon, on sites including schools and local community areas, as well as on privately-owned land.

Ash dieback disease first arrived in the UK in 2012, caused by a fungus whose spores are spread by the wind. The disease is now widespread in Devon and it is estimated that it will eventually kill up to 90% of the county's 1.9 million ash trees. Many young and mature ash have already been lost, leaving hedges, gardens, parks and roadsides without these majestic trees.

The tree nursery is part of Saving Devon's Treescapes, a project led by Devon Wildlife Trust on behalf of the Ash Dieback Resilience Forum. The project was established in 2021 in response to the unfolding crisis of Devon's ash trees and its work is supported by The National Heritage Lottery Fund, One Tree Planted and other funders.



Families roll up to help with tree planting efforts

Young shoot of an ash tree



This year...

We managed

2,600

nature reserves, protecting and restoring vital habitats

5,800

hectares of land were improved for nature following Wildlife Trust advice on planning applications (an increase from 2,800 last year)

1,050

kilometres of watercourses were managed by Wildlife Trusts

We received

159

gifts from major donors to help support nature's recovery (an increase from 111 last year)



GOAL 2

People are taking meaningful action

for nature and the climate, resulting in better decision making for the environment at both the local level and across the four nations of the UK.

Finding new ways to engage and interact with people and communities, and specifically groups who are traditionally underrepresented or struggle to access nature, is how we will drive real change. Only by feeling connected to the natural world will we care about it and feel passionate about reversing its destruction. The Wildlife Trusts are helping people reconnect with nature, supporting them to take action and driving the political, societal and behavioural changes that will enable our wild spaces to flourish.

Gannet

CASE STUDY

Recording wildlife with the local community

A vital three-year research project into Alderney's wildlife was granted the funding it needed to get off the ground, with the island's local community set to play a major role in its implementation.

The Alderney State of Nature Project has gotten underway thanks to funding from the Social Investment Fund (SIF) in Guernsey and will enable Alderney Wildlife Trust to better understand how key species and habitats on the island, and within its territorial waters, have changed over time.

While the project will employ two staff members until August

2026, the involvement of the Alderney community will be integral to its success. The funding will enable the Wildlife Trust to run engagement events with the aim of encouraging additional volunteer recorders to join the team and provide training for local volunteers to develop skills in biological recording. This will help to develop in-depth understanding and appreciation for the wildlife of Alderney and the challenges it faces. The resulting information and data will be made publicly available for all.



© ANDY ROUSE/2020VISION

CASE STUDY

Maximising our influence

With many great promises, but limited government action to tackle the nature and climate crises, cross-party political commitment to bring about nature's recovery is paramount. In April 2023, The Wildlife Trusts identified the upcoming UK General Election as a window of opportunity to raise nature up the agenda.

Over the next 12 months, The Wildlife Trusts galvanised, using our collective power to influence all prospective parliamentary candidates, regardless of party. This included gathering insights on green issues within local patches and presenting those to candidates, using the voices of our membership and community networks, in addition to traditional and digital media – demonstrating the importance of nature to the general public.

Themed internal events, including our annual Federation Conference, provided space for staff to collaborate and create campaigning resources. This meant that when the election was called, the entire federation was ready to move into action.

Wildlife Trusts held 15 local hustings, attended by over 2,400 members of the public. The Big Nature & Climate Debate – a national hustings – with representation from the Conservatives, Green Party, Labour and Liberal Democrats, was also held in partnership with Wildlife & Countryside Link and broadcast live on YouTube receiving over 4,500 views. General election-specific resources including window posters and emails were adapted by Wildlife Trusts to achieve constituency level influence – resulting in campaigning activity in 580 out of 650 constituencies. Meanwhile, Wildlife Trust leaders were generating significant and impactful media coverage on environmental issues.

Finally, our work culminated in the Restore Nature Now march, co-organised with other charities and bringing over 60,000 people to London's streets to demand action for nature, just one week before the General Election. It is now up to the new Labour Government to make good on their manifesto promises to 'deliver for nature' – and for the other parties to hold them to account.



Panellists at The Big Nature & Climate Debate

© GUY SHORROCK

Bringing communities together through Nextdoor Nature

The Nextdoor Nature project, funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund, enabled every Wildlife Trust in the UK to support community-led projects and provide dedicated advice and guidance to people wanting to re-engage with nature and help it flourish in their local areas.

The work undertaken over the past two years has had a transformational effect on the approach that Wildlife Trusts take to community organising. We set ourselves the target of working with 200 communities, but ended up working with more than 1,600. 43% of Wildlife Trusts are now working with people facing poverty and 41% are working with people with long-term health needs or impairments.

The outcomes of the project are better than we had ever hoped and the legacy of Nextdoor Nature will ensure that community organising remains a core part of what the Wildlife Trusts do and are known for.

Nextdoor Nature participants chatting in a community garden



CASE STUDY

Society Place, Derby

Just one of the many examples from Nextdoor Nature, Society Place aimed to breathe life back into a disused walkway - putting ownership of the space into the hands of young people, with the community at the heart of the project.

Bringing together Derbyshire Wildlife Trust, Arboretum Primary School and Derby City Council the project transformed an area that had previously been used for fly tipping and drug use and had become somewhere local people avoided. The shared vision to create a space that everyone could use, enjoy and be proud of galvanised the residents, school children and the council to transform Society Place and bring nature back into an urban area of the city.

The school's eco-council designed and created the new site and have continued to use and add to the walkway as part of their studies, as well as undertaking regular litter picks to keep the area clean and tidy.



Society Place volunteers

© LINNEY

Throughout the project we achieved...

The programme involved communities that were traditionally less likely to be able to access nature and green spaces



of Wildlife Trusts said that listening exercises with communities were useful

Since taking part:



of Wildlife Trusts are now working with people facing poverty



of Wildlife Trusts are now working with people with long-term health needs or impairments



of Wildlife Trusts are now working with migrants, refugees and asylum seekers



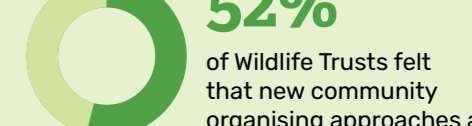
of Wildlife Trusts are now working with minoritised ethnic groups

"...when people chip in to help and support, [it] leads to a greater understanding on how they can improve nature." Community Organiser

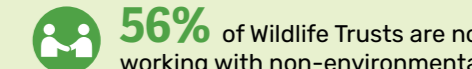
The programme aimed to reach 200 communities but actually reached over 1,600



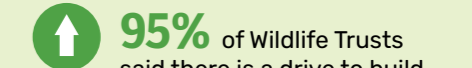
All Wildlife Trusts said that having a dedicated Community Organiser was useful



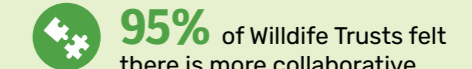
of Wildlife Trusts felt that new community organising approaches are now embedded into their own ways of working



of Wildlife Trusts are now working with non-environmental community groups



of Wildlife Trusts said there is a drive to build community assets



of Wildlife Trusts felt there is more collaborative working across organisations

"It's definitely contributed to a sense of purpose and empowerment towards the cause. You don't feel so hopeless." Participant

CASE STUDY

Wilder Together to restore the Stour Valley

Collaborative working between Wildlife Trusts, other environmental charities, corporate partners and local councils can bring people together and result in large scale, meaningful action for nature and climate. The Wilder Together in the Stour Valley partnership is an incredible example of how this works on the ground.

Suffolk Wildlife Trust, Essex Wildlife Trust, RSPB Flatford Wildlife Garden and the Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) joined forces to create an exciting new partnership.

Launched in April 2023, Wilder Together in the Stour Valley was established to support parish and town councils to create wildlife-friendly villages and towns by working with local communities in the Dedham Vale and Stour Valley.

A network of wild areas are now being restored, reconnected and maintained by residents, on both public and private land (including gardens), creating more space for nature on the doorsteps of the people living in the Stour Valley.

As part of the project, the partnership of organisations are running tours for local councillors, working with parish and town councils to encourage wildlife projects, hosting wildlife webinars and training days for volunteers and parishes, and providing free expert habitat and conservation advice. Engaging and communicating effectively with all of the key local stakeholders and making them feel involved and part of the project has been vital to ensuring it is a success and has 'buy-in' from everyone who lives and works in Deadham Vale and Stour Valley.

"Together we aim to harness the collective energy of community groups in the Stour Valley and enable them to act for wildlife for Suffolk's priority species such as hedgehogs, stag beetles and swifts.

It has never been more important that everyone comes together to create the space for nature that it so desperately needs. This is a brilliant new initiative that aims to make a real difference for both people and wildlife in our county."

Cathy Smith

Suffolk Wildlife Trust's Community Wildlife Advisor



© PAUL HOBSON

The project aims to bring nature back to local towns and villages



This year...

38,000

volunteers gave their time to help improve the wild spaces they love

593,000

people connected with nature when they took part in 30 Days Wild during June

944,000

members of Wildlife Trusts (an increase from 910,000 last year)

13,884

new supporters joined a Wildlife Trust through our campaign actions

© ROSS HODDINOTT/2020VISION



GOAL 3

Nature is playing a central and valued role in helping to address local and global problems.

Nature can help society tackle global issues like climate change, poor health, water pollution and food insecurity. Action is needed at every level to turn the tide in our fight for nature's recovery, including at a local level. Wildlife Trusts, working in partnership with each other, with other environmental charities, with businesses and with funders, are restoring natural ecosystems to help prevent flooding, store carbon and improve soil fertility. These nature-based solutions are delivering direct local impact and driving positive global change.

CASE STUDY

An urban success story on the edge of Doncaster

Yorkshire Wildlife Trust secured more space for wildlife in the middle of one of Yorkshire's most rapidly expanding business development zones.

Parson's Carr lies just off Junction 3 of the M18 and forms part of a block of nature reserves incorporating Potteric Carr, one of the Wildlife Trust's flagship sites with an onsite visitor centre, along with Carr Lodge and Manor Farm.

Sitting on green belt land, and on a floodplain, provided Yorkshire Wildlife Trust with the opportunity to ensure extensive compensation for wildlife as part of development plans. Now, nestled alongside huge storage centres used by the likes of Amazon and Lidl, you can find a mixture of ponds, meadows and wet grassland, where regular wild visitors include great crested newts. Hedge gaps have been filled and new hedging planted to attract birds like yellowhammers and grey partridges, and there are plans to improve the grassland by using seed from a local nature reserve.

The Wildlife Trust will also fence the site and introduce conservation grazing cattle, and dig some new ponds to encourage Potteric Carr's aquatic life to expand onto the new site. The reserve is already home to a substantial black-headed gull colony, as well as regularly breeding populations of avocet and little ringed plover, and the occasional marsh harrier.

The addition of Parson's Carr to the network of nature reserves at the edge of Doncaster creates an area of 377 hectares for wildlife, drainage solutions to prevent the risk of flooding to the business development zone, and more space for nature with community access.

Great crested newt

© NICK UPTON, NATUREPL.COM



CASE STUDY

Boosting nature and community well-being

Being happy and content, living sustainably with little to no carbon footprint, and generating a sense of well-being that working in nature provides is the desired 'dream' for many of us. At the Greenhouse Project, run by The Wildlife Trust for Lancashire, Manchester and North Merseyside as part of its pioneering Nature & Well-being Service, the dream is very much alive in Blackburn.

The Greenhouse Project seeks to support local community members and groups to develop wildlife-friendly food growing skills, helping them to live in greater harmony with the natural world. The project also raises awareness of local

places of natural beauty with community groups across the borough through a programme of wildlife walks.

As well as growing their own food, those involved in the project part-recycle local waste and natural products, produce compost and their own fertiliser, and hope soon to capture their own water and generate their own electricity.

In addition to getting more physically active, the greenhouses are a place for people to enjoy peace, laughter, creativity, learning, belonging and friendship. There is also the opportunity to participate in conservation activities, bushcraft, wildlife walks and mindfulness activities.



Staff and participants at the Greenhouse Project

© LANCASHIRE WILDLIFE TRUST

CASE STUDY

Managing flood risks the natural way

Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, with funding from RSA Insurance, installed a rain garden at the Gloucestershire Royal Hospital to help prevent flooding and bring wildlife back to an unloved area in the hospital grounds.

Located outside the Accident and Emergency department, the newly installed rain garden includes a large, raised planter surrounded by a curved wooden bench, providing space for people to stop and rest. It is capable of capturing a staggering 800 litres of water, helping to prevent surface-water flooding, which can bring chaos to communities. Sustainable urban drainage features, such as rain gardens, green verges and green-roofed bus stops, can reduce flash flooding by holding back water, cleaning it, then releasing it slowly back into our watercourses.

With a daunting 15,000 homes in Gloucester and 8,500 homes in Cheltenham potentially vulnerable to flooding each year, and with climate change continuing to cause unpredictable weather, the floods are set to continue unless preventative measures are put in place.

Along with the benefits to flooding that the rain garden will bring, it also provides a peaceful place to relax for staff and visitors outside a busy and often chaotic part of the hospital.

The rain garden is part of the Gloucester and Cheltenham Waterscapes project and includes the installation of a large swale (a short, vegetated channel, often referred to as a Sustainable Urban Drainage solution or SUDs) in Naunton Park, an enlargement of the Plock Court wetland area in Gloucester, plus the taking up of hard surfaces or 'de-paving' of driveways in Charlton Kings.

"The new rain garden at Gloucestershire Royal Hospital will help raise awareness of the practical steps that can be taken in communities to protect against flooding, as well as promoting biodiversity."

"We're pleased to be working with Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust and hope that our work to build natural flood management solutions inspires action in other regions too."

Laura Spiers

Head of Social Impact & ESG at RSA Insurance



This year...

We spent

£4,699,327

on water quality improvements in our streams and rivers

21,063

participants took part in a Wildlife Trust-led health and well-being programme

Wildlife Trusts managed

260

natural flood programmes

15,404,900

visits to a Wildlife Trust nature reserve

STRATEGIC TRANSFORMATION

1

Supporting and developing Wildlife Trusts as strong and effective independent actors

The 46 locally-based Wildlife Trusts throughout the UK have a unique understanding of and connection to the area in which they are based. This allows them to have a direct impact on the communities they serve, thanks to an ability to build meaningful relationships with those living there, including through community groups, schools and councils, with each local win for wildlife contributing to the national picture of achieving 30% of land for nature's recovery by 2030.



Local children helping with tree planting



Redwing

CASE STUDY

Harnessing community power

Worcestershire Wildlife Trust engaged with its local communities and coordinated joint efforts to improve an important area of land for nature. Local schools and community groups have planted trees at Green Farm to help restore the landscape. Adjacent to the Trust's Monkwood Nature Reserve, Green Farm was purchased in 2022 with a vision to increase woodland cover, restore the meadows and to manage existing habitats with wildlife in mind.

A new hedge planted by local schools has helped to improve the habitat for wildlife already present at Monkwood, such as dormice, and follows the line of an older hedge that was torn out at some point in the past.

There are eight meadows on Green Farm – some of which are already full of flowers and bounded by mature hedgerows. The Wildlife Trust's plans include restoring the rest of the meadows to their former glory and recreating historic habitats on site, such as orchards and wood pasture. Green Farm offers a wonderful opportunity to connect Monkwood to other sites of high value for wildlife in the area. To help with this, and to help combat the effects of climate change, natural

regeneration of native woodland will be encouraged alongside the planting of additional species that have other benefits, such as berry-rich rowans or drought-resistant hornbeams.

With the UK being one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world, the Trust's work at Green Farm not only benefits the local area and its people, but also supports the nationwide campaign with other Wildlife Trusts to see 30% of land and seas managed to help nature recovery by 2030.

"After years of planning, it's fantastic to see this exciting project now underway. With woodland restoration, we have to think about what the landscape will look like in 50, 100 or 200 years' time."

"That's why it is so important to engage children and community groups. By getting young people involved in the project, we hope to inspire the next generation of wildlife champions, who can help to protect and care for wild spaces like Monkwood in the future."

Dominique Cragg

Reserves officer managing Monkwood and Green Farm



Hazel dormouse



Family reading a sign at a nature reserve

STRATEGIC TRANSFORMATION

2

Working effectively as a distributed network and collective movement

The Wildlife Trusts are committed to working more closely with each other to tackle the enormous challenges presented by the interlinked nature and climate crises, which do not adhere to political, administrative or organisational boundaries.



Common mussels



Grey partridge

© CHRIS GOVERSALL/2020VISION



Perch

© ALEX MUSTARD/2020VISION



Pine martens

© TERRY WHITTAKER/2020VISION

CASE STUDY

Working in partnership for nature's recovery

In September 2023, a group of Wildlife Trusts launched Wilder Marches – an ambitious nature recovery project spanning two countries, four counties and three major river catchments.

Shropshire, Herefordshire, Montgomeryshire and Radnorshire Wildlife Trusts are working collaboratively to create, restore and preserve habitats across the historic and distinctive Marches region. 'Wilder Marches' describes a unique natural and cultural landscape straddling the Welsh-English border and includes the headwaters of the River Lugg, River Teme and River Clun.

Stretching across approximately 100,000 hectares, the area is home to long established rural communities and dotted with ancient woodlands, heathlands and peatlands, flower-rich meadows, wood pastures and 'ffridd', a special upland habitat of scrub and grassland. The Marches also have areas of intensive farming as well as extensive forestry plantations where nature is struggling to thrive. The Wilder Marches initiative is establishing a network of estates, farms, woods, nature reserves and commons to help nature recover.

Due to its geographical location, the Marches has a critical role to play in water storage, ecological resilience and mitigation of the impacts of the nature and climate crises.

The emergence of green finance and subsidy reforms are presenting opportunities to develop new business models that will help sustain farm incomes whilst allowing nature to be restored across the landscape. Working with local communities and landowners, the Wilder Marches initiative will create and restore habitats including peatlands, re-establish natural processes across river channels, floodplains and wetlands, and improve water quality – encouraging regenerative farming as part of the mix. Existing strongholds for rare species such as pine martens, curlews and freshwater pearl mussels will be protected. The team behind Wilder Marches is also building awareness and understanding around the role of nature-based solutions and green finance funding linked to this – creating what they are calling 'investible landscapes'.

Ultimately the initiative hopes to create a wilder future for the Marches, whilst fostering a shared understanding of natural heritage and a sense of ownership, alongside new prospects for rural employment and boosting the economy.

"I adore the Marches and this exciting new project presents a fantastic opportunity to restore this once abundant landscape along the Welsh-English border. I'd love to see the fields of the Marches full of curlew, lapwing and yellowhammer, ponds brimming with newts and frogs, and flower-rich hay meadows buzzing with insects once again."

Iolo Williams

TV presenter and Vice President of The Wildlife Trusts

© LINDA PITKIN/2020VISION

STRATEGIC TRANSFORMATION

3

Inspiring community organising and mobilising, especially amongst young people

If nature is to be restored at scale, we need many more people on its side. The Wildlife Trusts are exploring more open and inclusive ways to mobilise communities to take action for nature, including developing our skills as community facilitators.



A mother and daughter pick fruit in a community garden



Shared green spaces bring communities together

© ABBEY WILKINSON



Garden snail

© TOM MARSHALL



A family inspects the fruits of their labours

© GAVIN DICKSON

CASE STUDY

Coronation Gardens for Food and Nature

The Wildlife Trusts, in partnership with Incredible Edible, Garden Organic and the NFWI (National Federation of Women's Institutes) launched a new initiative in June 2023 with royal backing.

Coronation Gardens for Food and Nature pays tribute to His Majesty, King Charles III's, long-standing commitment to the natural world and aims to encourage people and communities across the United Kingdom to live sustainably and help wildlife recover by growing food and creating space for nature in gardens, on balconies and in shared green spaces.

Coronation Gardens for Food and Nature is hoping to enthuse thousands of people to grow their own food in wildlife-friendly gardens by providing advice and support. Its legacy is expected to last far into the future. The initiative was kick-started by a grant of £247,834 from The National Lottery Heritage Fund.

In pledging to take part in *Coronation Gardens for Food and Nature*, people are being encouraged to grow healthy food to eat, plant pollinator-friendly blooms to provide butterflies,

moths, bees and hoverflies with the sources of nectar and pollen they need to thrive, create a water feature, leave a patch of long grass or pile of logs to create shelter for wildlife, and go chemical and peat-free.

Gardens can play a huge role in giving nature a boost whilst also empowering people to live more sustainably and healthily - whatever the size of their 'patch'.

"We are really excited to be working on this fantastic new initiative to celebrate HM the King's longstanding commitment to sustainability and the environment. The WI has over a hundred years of proud history of protecting the natural environment, playing an active role in our communities, and promoting sustainability."

"We are honoured to be part of an initiative which continues the legacy of generations of members to safeguard the natural world and responds to the environmental challenges that face our generation and those ahead of us."

Melissa Green

Chief Executive, National Federation of Women's Institutes

STRATEGIC TRANSFORMATION

4

Undergoing a 'root and branch' digital transformation

Using digital technologies to enhance what we do and how we do it is enabling Wildlife Trusts to do more and simplify many of the complex challenges that come with bringing about nature's recovery.

Volunteers survey the health of wild grass



Mapping software can help us to plan nature's recovery



© STAFFORDSHIRE WILDLIFE TRUST

Red admiral butterfly



© GILLIAN DAY

A nest, held in a surveyor's hands



© TERRY WHITTAKER/2020VISION

CASE STUDY

Conservation for the future

Staffordshire Wildlife Trust has worked in partnership with local authorities, developers and landowners to ensure that Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) delivers the best results for nature. Net Gain Staffordshire is a bespoke website developed by the Wildlife Trust that makes the process simple and transparent for all.

Net Gain Staffordshire provides complete information on Biodiversity Net Gain opportunities in the county. Potential sites are displayed on an interactive map of the county, which is overlaid with a map of the Nature Recovery Network, showing the optimum locations for nature's recovery in the area.

The new website provides a strategic approach to nature's recovery in Staffordshire, helping to remove delays in the planning process for developers while providing vital information on the habitat opportunities on any proposed sites. Net Gain Staffordshire hope the site will improve the quality and connectivity of habitats across Staffordshire, funded through Biodiversity Net Gain.

Across The Wildlife Trusts we are investing in and incorporating new technologies to enhance our impact and speed up the work we need to undertake for nature's recovery. A new Geographic Information System (GIS) platform has been rolled out across the federation and will be used to accurately measure all of our nature reserves, with applications for ecosystem services mapping, vegetation mapping, protected species mapping and analysis of ecological risk.

Biodiversity Net Gain explained

Biodiversity Net Gain is an approach to land management that aims to deliver measurable improvements for nature by creating or enhancing wildlife habitats, rivers and streams, and hedgerows, in association with a new development. Improvements to biodiversity must be 'additional,' this means new developments must leave nature in a better state than what was there before.

New housing developments can make space for homes and nature



© SIMON FINLAY PHOTOGRAPHY

STRATEGIC TRANSFORMATION

5

Delivering a step-change in the scale and diversity of funding for nature's recovery

The urgency and scale of the nature and climate crises means our work is as complex as ever, requiring greater diversity and flexibility of funding. To achieve our vision, The Wildlife Trusts are constantly exploring new funding opportunities, partnerships and business models, all the while protecting our independence and integrity.

Upland heather at dusk



Hadrian's Wall



Golden plover



Sphagnum moss



CASE STUDY

New funding for vital wildlife projects

In August 2023, The Wildlife Trusts unveiled a new programme that will accelerate nature recovery and help to reverse catastrophic declines in wildlife.

Across the UK, we are spearheading keystone species reintroduction projects, rewilding initiatives and advocating for better protections for marine and coastal habitats, thanks to £6 million from the newly established Ecological Restoration Fund.

Projects benefitting from this funding include Northumberland Wildlife Trust's Hadrian's Wall Corridor – a nature recovery programme around Newcastle and Carlisle; a landscape recovery programme on Ughill Farm in the Peak District with Sheffield and Rotherham Wildlife Trust; Radnorshire Wildlife Trust's habitat creation drive creating new wetland, scrub and woodland in the Welsh Marshes; and peatland restoration in Northern Ireland with Ulster Wildlife.

The funds come at a time when more than 40% of species in the UK are in decline and over 15% are threatened with extinction. Seas are at risk of over-exploitation and development, rivers are dying from agricultural and sewage pollution and many people suffer from lack of access to nature. The combination of these issues make the UK one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world and new funds such as this are much needed to help reverse this trend.

"We're proud to support The Wildlife Trusts in their ambitious vision for UK nature recovery. Recognising that our collective futures are intrinsically bound to the health of our environment, the urgency to address the UK's troubling species decline and habitat degradation is paramount. By knitting together and rejuvenating wild spaces, we're not only creating richer habitats for wildlife but also bringing tangible benefits to local communities."

Daniel Hotz
Executive Director and Founder of
the Ecological Restoration Fund

ENABLING PRIORITY

1

Getting our own house in order

In calling for nature's recovery, The Wildlife Trusts recognise that we need to lead by example. That includes in the ways we manage our own environmental and community impacts – and having the data to understand those impacts is essential to making better decisions.



A fern emerges from wildfire-damaged ground



Surveying freshwater invertebrates to assess the health of the River Wye in Herefordshire

© HEREFORDSHIRE WILDLIFE TRUST



The Wildlife Trusts' offices on the banks of the River Trent

© THE WILDLIFE TRUSTS



Installing water-control sluices on an Essex Wildlife Trust nature reserve

© ESSEX WILDLIFE TRUST

CASE STUDY

Adapting to the climate threat

The nature and climate crises are inextricably linked, which is why The Wildlife Trusts are taking bold action to tackle and adapt to climate change. Since 2022, we have been assessing and reporting on how climate change is affecting our charities, including the impact on our land holdings and the wildlife that depends on them. Climate change poses one of the biggest threats to our nature reserves, with drought, flooding, heat waves and wildfires all posing significant risks.

Collectively, we are making progress on cutting our carbon emissions and adapting the way we work to operate more sustainably and better protect our staff, visitors, buildings and sites. Peatlands, grasslands, woodlands, freshwater and coastal nature reserves across the UK are being restored, reconnected, and in some cases reinvented as climate change starts to make an impact. Examples include:

- The Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire & Northamptonshire has boosted fenland resilience through its acquisition of Speechly's Farm, increasing the peatland restored in the Great Fen to 1,900 hectares. This has improved connectivity and the habitat will retain more carbon stores in times of drought.
- Norfolk Wildlife Trust has been working with the Environment Agency to adapt Cley and Salthouse Marshes. They have rejuvenated reedbeds and moved

a section of the 'New Cut' flood drain to evacuate flood water more effectively and help the marshes maintain carbon-storing freshwater coastal habitats.

- Manx Wildlife Trust has planted 8,000 trees to create a new temperate rainforest at Creg y Cowin and are planning to plant a further 27,000 over the next four years. As the canopy closes this will create a cool, damp refuge for animals away from extreme temperatures, benefitting birds such as pied flycatcher and wood warbler.

In addition, RSWT has developed an in-house climate change training course for staff across the federation and our procurement practices ensure any suppliers we engage with are rigorously assessed on their green credentials. We are exploring ways to reduce our carbon footprint further through energy suppliers and by using less energy: maximising the energy efficiency of our buildings and reviewing the vehicles we use, travel, events, catering and digital carbon emissions.

Our role at The Wildlife Trusts is to do as much as we can to help nature adapt to climate change impacts, advocate for nature-based solutions to tackle the climate crisis, and continue to prioritise ongoing and dedicated research in climate change adaptation as we encounter greater extremes in our weather.

ENABLING PRIORITY

2

Ensuring our nature reserves and land assets are the foundation for nature's recovery

The Wildlife Trusts manage some of the best nature reserves and wildlife habitats across the UK and Crown Dependencies. Often the last remaining fragments of wildlife habitat, we are working to restore, expand and connect small and isolated nature reserves, by working in partnership to ensure more land is managed for nature.



Lyscombe landscape



Wildflower meadow



Sheep graze in an agricultural landscape



A veteran oak tree

CASE STUDY

Lyscombe purchase creates new nature recovery network in Dorset

Dorset Wildlife Trust purchased a significant new site for conservation and environmental restoration in March 2024.

Farmland at Lyscombe, located 10 miles north-east of Dorchester, was purchased in partnership with Natural England through the National Nature Reserves programme and planned nutrient mitigation credit scheme – alongside generous donations from Dorset Wildlife Trust's members and supporters.

The farm lies within the Dorset Downs in an area of chalk grassland, scrub, wildflower meadows and ancient woodland, and includes a 50-hectare Site of Special Scientific Interest, Sites of Nature Conservation Interest and several Scheduled Monuments, including Lyscombe Chapel.

While the Wildlife Trust and Natural England's primary concern is managing the area for nature recovery, it will also help reduce the levels of harmful nutrients entering Poole Harbour. Wildlife and water quality in the area has suffered from an excess of nutrients coming down its waterways, originating from both housing (via treated sewage) and, significantly, from fertilisers and manure applied to farmland. By adopting a more sustainable form of land

management, nutrients entering the top of the catchment at Lyscombe will be reduced by removing inputs and through natural recovery measures, such as creating new wetland habitat that can capture nutrients.

Over the coming years, Dorset Wildlife Trust plans to improve the habitat to support the site's downland and act as the catalyst for increasing wildlife abundance throughout the landscape. A mix of natural regeneration techniques and a rewilding approach, blended with traditional conservation management using livestock grazing will be used to care for the site. And, by working with neighbouring landowners and farmers, the hope is that Lyscombe will become the centre from which a nature recovery network will form across the wider Dorset Downs landscape.

"We are delighted to be partnering with Dorset Wildlife Trust and others in this significant project which has the potential to substantially boost nature's recovery in this part of Dorset. This is a great example of thinking creatively and bringing partners and different types of funding together."

Rachel Williams,
Deputy Director, Natural England

ENABLING PRIORITY

3

Develop clear and consistent evidence-based policies

With new and complex environmental challenges emerging, The Wildlife Trusts need to take a clear and confident stand for nature, with our position on any particular issue underpinned by high-quality data, local expertise and technical analysis.



Flood rates and floodwater levels are increasing year-on-year

Volunteer conducting a riverbed survey



© BERTIE GREGORY 2020/VISION

Autumn leaves rest in a polluted pond



© ALAN PRICE

As agricultural practices become more intensive, nature bears the consequences



© TERRY WHITTAKER

CASE STUDY

New nature market principles to tackle 'greenwashing'

In October 2023, The Wildlife Trusts, RSPB, Woodland Trust and National Trust published a set of principles for ensuring nature markets truly deliver for nature, climate and people.

Nature markets, which are based on the sale of environmental credits such as carbon credits, biodiversity units, nutrient credits and natural flood management payments, have suffered from a lack of regulation and poor quality schemes that allows certain industries and businesses to 'greenwash'.

Nature markets are generated by nature-based solutions (actions that protect, manage and restore natural ecosystems to address environmental, economic and social challenges). If regulated and delivered effectively, they have the capacity to deliver multiple benefits for society and the environment, as well as opening up new income streams for rural communities and farmers.

The Wildlife Trusts, RSPB, Woodland Trust and National Trust joined forces and worked with Finance Earth and Federated

Hermes – a global leader in responsible investment management – to co-develop *Nature Markets Principles*, a set of voluntary principles for science-based investment, to support high integrity natural capital markets in the UK.

Finance Earth, in partnership with Federated Hermes, will manage the Government-backed UK Nature Impact Fund that aims to stimulate institutional investment at scale in high quality nature restoration projects across the UK. The UK Nature Impact Fund intends to adopt the *Nature Markets Principles* and apply them across all of its activities in UK nature markets.

"These principles send a firm message from some of the UK's top deliverers of nature-based solutions that we will only engage with the highest integrity schemes. Buyers must stand up to scrutiny and truly contribute to nature's recovery in the UK, while benefiting local communities. We welcome the business community and others working in this space to join us in upholding these principles."

Dr Rob Stoneman

Director of Landscape Recovery, The Wildlife Trusts

ENABLING PRIORITY

4

Invest in a high-skilled and diverse staff and volunteer network, and build a movement-wide learning culture

To address the challenges faced by our natural world, The Wildlife Trusts are investing in staff and volunteers with skills in new and emerging fields, whilst making improvements to our structures and procedures to increase the ways in which people and communities can contribute to nature's recovery.



A volunteer gives a thumbs-up whilst balsam bashing on a nature reserve



A Suffolk Wildlife Trust volunteer tends a herd of wild horses on a nature reserve

© JOHN HURGISON



Volunteers rebuilding a dry stone wall

© BEN WOLSTENCROFT



Volunteers enjoying a well-earned cup of tea

© GAVIN DICKSON

CASE STUDY

Improving the ways we care for volunteers

Wildlife Trusts rely on the passion and dedication of thousands of volunteers who give their time to support our cause, playing a significant role in helping to bring nature back. Coordinating their efforts and ensuring they feel part of a safe and bigger community is critical to maintaining, growing and getting the most out of this amazing network.

In 2023, work began on sourcing a new Volunteer Management System that could be adopted across The Wildlife Trusts. Following an extensive procurement process, a system from TeamKinetic was selected for its suitability for a federated organisation such as ours. As well as enabling Wildlife Trusts to handle and streamline all aspects of the volunteering process in one place, including onboarding, volunteer engagement and the promotion of volunteering opportunities it also addresses issues around safeguarding and compliance, ensuring the well-being of all volunteers.

Durham Wildlife Trust was the first to go live, with Derbyshire, Dorset, Essex, Gloucestershire, Nottinghamshire, Wiltshire and Yorkshire Wildlife Trusts all currently in the process of implementing the new system with their volunteers. North Wales, Montgomeryshire, Herefordshire, London, and Birmingham and the Black Country Wildlife Trusts, along with Wildlife Trusts Wales, plan to adopt the system in the next year.

Its adoption by multiple Wildlife Trusts will provide impactful reporting, helping us to better showcase the work of volunteers and reduce the administrative work associated with volunteer management, communication and engagement.

Wildlife Trusts staff at a Pride event



We're *wild* about inclusion

Environmental and conservation charities have notoriously struggled with diversity and representation within their workforces and remain one of the least ethnically diverse professions in the UK. Attracting people from different ethnicities or backgrounds, young people and disabled people to work in a sector which suffers from an image of being a place for 'white middle class people' has proven to be difficult. The statistics are stark – one in 20 workers in the environmental charity sector identified as an ethnic minority in 2023, compared to one in eight in the wider UK workforce.

Facing these challenges head on, The Wildlife Trusts has placed the diversity of their staff and trustees at the heart of Strategy 2030, as highlighted in our enabling priority four: invest in a high skilled and diverse staff and volunteer network. Not content with doing the required bare minimum, we are going above and beyond to accelerate our shift to having a more representative workforce and embedding the 'golden thread' of equality, diversity and inclusion in everything we do – from recruitment and induction, to training, communications and culture.

We conduct an annual diversity survey to help track our progress and identify the groups that are currently not represented or under-represented in our workforce. Our headline findings include:

- Some minority groups are overrepresented whilst others are underrepresented - showing that we still have more work to do.
- Our pay gaps are lower than the national averages, where statistics are available to allow for comparison across multiple factors including gender, sexual orientation, disability and ethnicity.

- Our community organising approach is supporting more diverse communities to create nature spaces, improving access to nature, fostering a love of wildlife and boosting well-being.

To help tackle these gaps, we have implemented an equality, diversity and inclusion policy that stems from the Social Model of Inclusion, which focuses on environmental, organisational and attitudinal barriers that cause disadvantages.

To support Wildlife Trusts on this journey, we've created resources and toolkits, held events and developed staff networks. Examples include our first Wild Futures career event to help diversify our talent pipeline – with 70% of attendees having never applied for a job with us previously, but 80% reporting they'd consider applying to work with us after the event. Readily available resources include 60-second bitesize videos, terminology guides, in-depth online training for staff and monthly podcasts on topics such as LGBTQ+ inclusion and anti-racism. Meanwhile, the development of six staff networks, now with over 500 members, has helped to reinforce a sense of community and empower staff to influence organisational decisions by providing a space to discuss challenges and achievements and to collaboratively think of ways of making The Wildlife Trusts a better place to work.

We are committed to continually reviewing and improving our structures and practices so that our organisation can be more inclusive and welcome new and more diverse members. We aim to become an environmental charity that leads the way and whilst there is still a long way to go, the foundations are in place, we are listening to underrepresented groups and are heading in a positive direction.

Our staff networks

COLOURS OF NATURE

For people of colour – a safe space to share both positive and negative experiences at work, a place to network and have conversations with peers.

NATURE FOR ALL

For employees with disabilities – a place to provide peer support, to listen and learn from each other, to celebrate and raise awareness around disabilities and improve accessibility across The Wildlife Trusts.

NATURE IN MIND

For employees who live with mental health conditions – this network is a place to connect and share experiences, celebrate and raise awareness of mental health causes, inclusion, activities and good well-being practices across The Wildlife Trusts.

NEXT GEN NATURE

For young employees (under the age of 32) – a network that provides peer support and a place to share experiences and to ensure young voices are valued and influential across all Wildlife Trusts.

OUT FOR NATURE

For employees who identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community – this network provides peer support and a space to learn from each other's experiences, raise awareness of LGBTQ+ history and a place to organise inclusive events and socials for supporters and staff.

WOMEN IN NATURE

An inclusive space for women of all backgrounds, including trans women and non-binary people – this network provides a social space to share experiences and celebrate each other, for training and development opportunities, and to raise awareness of the issues women face in the workplace.

ENABLING PRIORITY

5

Speak with a bold and confident voice, further increasing our impact and influence

The Wildlife Trusts are rooted in local, diverse communities and have both credibility and a good reputation as being a voice for nature. We are using that grounding to call for its recovery and speak out against actions that will lead to further decline both locally and nationally.

A peregrine falcon flies over Parliament



Cumbria Wildlife Trust's Chief Executive gives an interview on Channel 4 News

Stephen Trotter
CEO, Cumbria Wildlife Trust



Healthy rivers and waterways are vital for the well-being of our environment

© LINDA PITKIN/2020VISION



Former Environment Minister, Rebecca Pow, speaks at The Big Nature & Climate Debate

- Nature Minister (Conservative Party)

CASE STUDY

Leading from the front and holding decision-makers to account

In 2023, a series of nature-negative decisions and u-turns by the UK Government resulted in The Wildlife Trusts and other eNGOs declaring an 'attack on nature' by those in power and a demand for immediate action to be taken.

In November, prior to the King's Speech, The Wildlife Trusts published a list of 10 broken promises by the UK Government on the environment, shining a spotlight on an agenda that threatened habitats and wild spaces, and as part of an ongoing effort to hold the government to account with every decision that contributed to nature's decline. This included repeated attempts to water-down environmental protections through ditching nutrient neutrality rules, the announcement not to prioritise species reintroduction and the passing of the Retained EU Law Act, which allows the UK Government to revoke or weaken environmental legislation without parliamentary scrutiny.

Additionally, there have been several delays to key policies such as Biodiversity Net Gain, a Chemicals Strategy and a substantial review of the National Planning Policy Framework, which was promised for 2023.

We used the strength of our collective voice, representing over 944,000 members, 3,600 staff and 38,000 volunteers to highlight our concerns through the national media. Our response to the change in water pollution rules was featured across the media, our reaction to the delay on making Biodiversity Net Gain a mandatory part of the planning system in England was on BBC News, and a stark warning from The Wildlife Trusts Chief Executive, Craig Bennett, was covered by a major interview on BBC Today programme and Sky News.

In total, our efforts to ensure nature makes the headlines resulted in over 43,000 pieces of national coverage across print, broadcast and online media – generating 502 billion opportunities to be read, watched or heard!

The Wildlife Trusts' Chief Executive, Craig Bennett, speaks at the Restore Nature Now! march

Representing The Wildlife Trusts on a national and global stage

The Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts (RSWT) sits at the heart of The Wildlife Trusts, ensuring a strong, collective, national voice for wildlife, helping to coordinate work between individual Wildlife Trusts and leading the development of the movement and The Wildlife Trusts federation as a whole.

RSWT exists to promote the aims of the federation, build and manage key relationships with national decision-makers and corporate partners, influence the UK Government, provide infrastructure support and specialist advice and expertise, support communities of practice and project groups, administer grants and partnership programmes and act as the lead body for programmes that cut across Wildlife Trust boundaries.

Over the last year, RSWT has focused its efforts on supporting and developing The Wildlife Trusts through its three defined core purposes:

- Develop and strengthen The Wildlife Trusts' federation
- Co-ordinate and ensure the successful delivery of Strategy 2030
- Deliver direct external impact.



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Develop and strengthen The Wildlife Trusts' federation



There are 37 Wildlife Trusts in England, 5 in Wales, a Wildlife Trust for Scotland and another for Northern Ireland. There are also Wildlife Trusts in Alderney and the Isle of Man. Each Wildlife Trust is an independent charity, but all 46 come together as The Wildlife Trusts.

The 46 individual charities that make up The Wildlife Trusts are embedded within the local communities they serve, having a direct and positive impact on the wildlife and people that surround them. When Wildlife Trusts work together, our collective impact can create national attention and lead to global change. RSWT is committed to developing and strengthening the federation to deliver greater impact for nature's recovery.

RSWT has developed key corporate partnerships to support The Wildlife Trusts' work. An in-person business event organised in partnership with Hogan Lovells, looked back on the six months since the UN Biodiversity Conference (COP15). The event generated huge interest, with guest speakers including the Secretary of State, Natural England Chair, UN Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre Chief Executive, and senior representatives from Aviva, Bupa and the Green Finance Institute.

The Nextdoor Nature programme got underway and has been a phenomenal success, placing a community organiser in every Wildlife Trust in England, Scotland and Wales and helping re-connect hundreds of communities. Feedback from The National Lottery Heritage Fund assessors recognised that Nextdoor Nature was more than another outreach programme and was genuinely community driven. The creativity and breadth of solutions for nature's recovery being generated by our communities is highly positive and unique in its outcomes, demonstrating people empowerment and producing fresh and new solutions.

RSWT organised a trip for Wildlife Trust leaders and Chief Executives to visit leading landscape recovery programmes in the Netherlands in early July 2023 to look at how large-scale rewilding can help provide huge societal benefits such as flood alleviation. The trip was a resounding success and is inspiring our own thinking and approaches to bringing nature back in the UK.

To foster better collaboration between Wildlife Trusts and help align how we work, a series of key frameworks were agreed and adopted in 2023. We now have detailed frameworks that govern the federation's approach to collective decision-making, corporate engagement, equality, diversity and inclusion, safeguarding, internal communications and cyber security.

Stepping up the scale of funding for the work of Wildlife Trusts is helping ramp up the pace of nature's recovery. RSWT secured funding for landscape recovery, is pioneering new uses of digital technology and data to enhance our fundraising and is helping to build the federation's green finance community of practice.

Our strategic lead for safeguarding provides training, support and advice; cyber security audits are regularly conducted and support is offered to Wildlife Trusts; and an experienced and proactive equality, diversity and inclusion team offers an array of support, resources, training and more as we build a more inclusive community.

APRIL

We launched a new handbook to help our communities go peat-free in their gardens and recognise the importance of healthy peatlands for nature and climate

MAY

Our wildlife-friendly garden, led by Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust, was awarded a gold medal and won both Best in Show and Best Construction at RHS Malvern Spring Festival

JUNE

Our annual engagement campaign, 30 Days Wild, attracted more than 124,000 sign ups, including 13,854 schools, 1,109 care homes and 1,639 businesses

JULY

Analysis in our new report *A Natural Health Service - Improving Lives and Saving Money* found that the NHS could save £635 million by running a green prescribing scheme

AUGUST

The theme for National Marine Week 2023 was 'Generation Sea', which celebrated the work of young marine conservationists and encouraged more young people to get out and engage with nature along our coasts

SEPTEMBER

State of Nature - a jointly produced report from environmental charities on UK wildlife - revealed the devastating decline of our wildlife in recent decades

Co-ordinate and ensure successful delivery of Strategy 2030

Finding new and innovative ways of bringing leaders and staff from across The Wildlife Trusts' federation together to share experiences and expertise, and collaborate on key projects, has been essential to generating momentum and progression towards our strategic goals set out in Strategy 2030.

Key moments have included our annual Federation Conference, bringing together 280 of our staff at Keele University campus and streaming live online for hundreds of others who couldn't attend in person. The conference theme centred on driving forward our Strategy 2030 through the lens of the General Election – which proved to be timely preparation for the 2024 election campaign.

We also brought together Wildlife Trust Chairs, Chief Executives and leaders for a successful Leaders' Conference in Lancashire to discuss Strategy 2030 milestones. Chairs attended sessions on governance and equality, diversity and inclusion to ensure best practice in these key areas was implemented across the federation, whilst Chief Executives took part in crisis scenario exercises to better prepare Wildlife Trusts for the devastation that can come as a result of natural disasters, including wildfires and floods.

As well as training for Chairs, RSWT has been leading a number of initiatives to ensure that as a federation we are driving forward on our commitment for greater equality, inclusion and diversity, with the completion of The Wildlife Trusts' diversity survey. Completed in 2023 by all 46 Wildlife

Trusts and RSWT, it provides us with an in-depth overview of diversity in the federation and supports our goal to invest in a diverse staff network; information that has been made publicly available with publication of our first diversity report. The report was produced in a number of formats, including Plain English, Welsh, Easy Read and in a Screen Reader format, and marks the start of our transparent journey to becoming a more inclusive and diverse employer.

Fundraising to support some of the big ambitions contained within Strategy 2030 is crucial and led RSWT to take part in the 'Big Give' green match funding for the first time, a scheme that sees any funds raised through public donations doubled by corporates and philanthropists. Our campaign to raise funds to support the 30 by 30 target (30% of land and sea restored for nature by 2030) attracted an amazing £243,346 from generous donors.

The digital transformation of The Wildlife Trusts is also fundamental to achieving our goal of putting nature into recovery. Our focus on creating a better digital infrastructure has led us to develop a CRM data hub, which, for the first time, utilises live fundraising data from Wildlife Trusts, providing rich insights that Wildlife Trusts can use to develop their fundraising practice. One other priority area identified under the digital 'umbrella' includes the use of a common Geographical Information System (GIS), with RSWT driving adoption to enable the sharing of key data on the land we own and manage throughout the UK. 40 Wildlife Trusts have committed to be part of the platform.

We are also heavily committed to 'getting our own house in order' when it comes to our impact on nature and climate, leading us to publish three key climate reports: our latest collective greenhouse gas accounts from all Wildlife Trusts (which show that our emissions have dropped by 10%); our annual climate adaptation report; and a showcase report of nature-based solutions aimed at external stakeholders. Together these reports highlight that The Wildlife Trusts are spending millions of pounds on climate action and nature-based solutions.



Wildlife Trust leaders visit landscape recovery projects in the Netherlands

Deliver direct external impact

As the national voice of The Wildlife Trusts, RSWT co-ordinates direct engagement with the UK Government on policy matters, and campaigns and communicates on issues that impact all Wildlife Trusts, using both traditional and digital media. Our groundbreaking reports and events raise awareness and challenge the status quo, and the power of our collective voice is utilised to bring about change and tackle the national and global threats to nature.

In our efforts to influence UK policy, RSWT has represented The Wildlife Trusts at a number of key meetings and roundtables, including a Defra roundtable to discuss the transition to a neonicotinoid-free future for sugar beet farming, following the pesticide's repeated approval for use in recent years. In addition to meeting with government officials, we also released two reports to shift farming policy into a more wildlife-friendly position. This included *The Scale of Need* in partnership with the RSPB and National Trust, which – using new data – revealed at least £4.4 billion a year of public investment is needed in nature and climate-friendly farming to meet legal targets. A second report, co-published with the Nature Friendly Farming Network, *Farming at the Sweet Spot*, proposes a new model for farming systems that optimises farm profitability whilst working with nature and mitigating climate change.

Our policy work also extends to health and well-being, as being inextricably linked to a healthy natural environment. To champion the connection between good mental and physical health and access to nature, we published *A Natural Health Service* report in 2023 to wide media coverage. This has enabled us to strengthen alliances within the health sector and provides excellent evidence of the cost-savings potential to the NHS in relation to green social prescribing.

Good data and evidence are crucial to underpinning our policy work, leading us to launch the *Great Big Nature Survey* in 2023. A 'first of its kind' survey, it aims to better understand what people in the UK really think about nature. Responses to date have told us that campaigning and community organising are significant factors in diversifying support for The Wildlife Trusts and indicated that our

supporter demographic is much more ethnically diverse and less dominated by the middle class than previously assumed and gleaned from membership data.

To grow and diversify the number of connection points we hold with members of the public, RSWT launched a new initiative – Coronation Gardens for Food and Nature – in partnership with Garden Organic, Incredible Edible and The Women's Institutes thanks to funding from The National Lottery Heritage Fund. This initiative aims to encourage people to grow more food in a wildlife-friendly way.

Throughout 2023 and 2024, we delivered and participated in significant new 'in-person' events to reach new audiences. This included having a significant presence at regenerative farming festival, Groundswell (with online broadcasts throughout the event) and sponsored Wildlife Trust gardens at RHS Malvern Spring Festival and RHS Hampton Court Palace Garden Festival with both gardens winning a clutch of prizes and significant media coverage. We also attended the Glastonbury Festival for the first time in 2023. Our #LovePeat exhibition, as part of the Precious Peatlands programme, saw a wide range of festival goers engaging with The Wildlife Trusts and issues around peat extraction.

Our media team achieves widespread national coverage, raising awareness of our work and the plight of nature. The Wildlife Trusts' annual *Marine Review*, which focuses on the marine highlights and challenges of the previous year, provides as an excellent example securing over 300 pieces of media coverage, including BBC Breakfast, Sky News and Radio 4's Today programme.

OCTOBER

We co-published the *Nature Market Principles*, covering carbon credits, biodiversity units and nutrient credits, with a view to encouraging responsible private investment in nature's recovery

NOVEMBER

We awarded the prestigious Christopher Cadbury Medal to Dr Rob Stoneman, RSWT's director of landscape recovery and previous Chief Executive of several Wildlife Trusts; and Rosemary Parslow a volunteer for 60 years at the Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust

DECEMBER

We launched the 2023 *Marine Review*, which shared encounters with marine wildlife from the past year across the UK, as well as the challenges facing our marine environment

JANUARY

The *Wildlife Trusts' Diversity Report 2023* explored the diversity of staff and trustees across the 46 Wildlife Trusts, analysing sex, race, gender, age and disability status

FEBRUARY

We teamed up with Universal Studios and their latest family film *Migration*, which follows a family of mallards on their journey across America, to provide new engagement opportunities

MARCH

We launched the 2024 Wild About Gardens campaign and asked people to rethink how they feel about slugs and snails and learn to live with them in their garden

Marine conservation officer, Dani Clifford, speaks on BBC Breakfast

Daniele Clifford
Marine Conservation Officer, Wildlife Trusts
BBC BREAKFAST

Working for wildlife in Wales

Wildlife Trusts Wales works to bring about nature's recovery in Wales by advising and exerting influence on Welsh Government and other stakeholders through campaigning activity, advocacy work and partnership building, ensuring critical decisions that impact wildlife are being made with nature and climate in mind.

Following years of advocacy by Wildlife Trusts Wales, in 2023, the Welsh Government Road Review Panel set four principles that will effectively stop any new road schemes in Wales. This work also saw planning legislation strengthen for Sites of Special Scientific Interest and the introduction of Net Benefit for Biodiversity, requiring developers to ensure no loss of nature. Our campaigning work on roads was recognised by the Future Generations Office, identifying Wildlife Trusts Wales as one of 100 Change Makers for our successful campaign against an extension to the M4 motorway.

Further advocacy work led to nature and climate being included as a key principle in the Agriculture (Wales) Bill and also the safeguarding of a £9.8 million Nature Networks Fund, which aims to strengthen the resilience of Wales's network of protected land and marine sites.

Meanwhile partnership work has resulted in the launch of a new report, *Pathways to 30 by 30*, which outlines a budget requirement in Wales of £424 million for nature's recovery. Whilst a joint campaign with Climate Cymru called for a Nature Positive (Wales) Bill that sets a statutory nature target and establishes a Welsh Office for Environmental Protection, as in England. This campaign went on to receive over 15,000 signatories and delivered an open letter signed by over 300 organisations – the largest ever seen in Wales.

Work with the five individual Wildlife Trusts in Wales has focused on ways that we can better share resources and work collaboratively, with particular progress made in aligning HR and digital assets. We've also agreed three priority All-Wales programmes for nature restoration, which focus on the uplands, on coasts and rivers.

All-Wales project, Stand for Nature Wales, which has brought together young people, developed a Youth Manifesto that was presented to the Climate Change Minister at COP15 and is continuing to be used by Wildlife Trusts Wales in our advocacy work.

Wildlife Trusts Wales have led a number of events, including at the Royal Welsh Agricultural Show, delivering a series of 10 talks on farming and nature. We also attended the Plaid Cymru Conference, where we delivered a side event to highlight The Wildlife Trusts and Nature Friendly Farming Network's report, *Farming at the Sweet Spot*. In addition, we also organised a Senedd event on reducing pesticide use and launched a pesticide-free pledge.

We have also stepped up our efforts to keep the Welsh language alive in the environmental sector, a key priority for Wildlife Trusts Wales in the last couple of years. This has seen us support Mentrau Iaith Cymru with their new project Gwreiddiau Gwyllt (Wild Roots) to increase Welsh language use in nature. In addition, we have adopted a Welsh Language Policy at The Wildlife Trusts, which requires Welsh translation for all relevant UK publications produced nationally.



High impact partnerships

THE NATIONAL LOTTERY HERITAGE FUND

Our Nextdoor Nature project, supported by £5 million from The National Lottery Heritage Fund, is empowering communities all over the UK to decide how they want to help nature thrive where they live – and make it happen.

With support from The Wildlife Trusts, people are helping nature to recover right on their doorstep, through hundreds of community-driven projects. Last year, The National Lottery Heritage Fund also supported us to explore how digital technologies and innovation could help more people access and enjoy nature with The Wildlife Trusts.

ESMÉE FAIRBAIRN FOUNDATION

Esmée Fairbairn Foundation has supported our work to restore nature on land and at sea, in particular our work to engage more young people in nature's recovery and our work to protect marine wildlife from the damaging impacts of development at sea.

The Esmée Fairbairn Foundation Land Purchase Facility is used to purchase land of high current or potential conservation value. Once purchased, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation leases the land to Wildlife Trusts for them to buy within a two year timeframe, allowing an opportunity to fundraise. Between April 2023 to March 2024, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation approved six applications from five Wildlife Trusts totalling £5.2 million.

PEOPLE'S POSTCODE LOTTERY

We would like to thank players of People's Postcode Lottery for their generous support over many years. Funding raised by players supported our annual nature challenge, 30 Days Wild, helping close to 600,000 people connect with nature each day during June.

The funding also enabled Wildlife Trusts to care for special wild places where people can spend time in nature and learn about the wonderful wildlife around them. It supported our Wild LIVE events, where guests discussed important issues affecting people and nature, and the work of our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion team in helping to ensure that people of all backgrounds and abilities can enjoy nature and get involved with The Wildlife Trusts.

ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION FUND

The Ecological Restoration Fund is supporting our work to protect and restore marine ecosystems and restore nature across large areas of land. This includes bringing back missing keystone species that help to create habitats for a diverse range of wildlife.

In the last 12 months this funding has enabled and supported Wildlife Trusts to make several key land acquisitions across England, Wales and Northern Ireland contributing to a UK commitment to protect and conserve a minimum of 30% of land and sea by 2030 and creating Nature Recovery Networks. Two posts have been recruited to deliver the marine elements of the programme and a Beaver Reintroduction Manager is also now in post and working with Wildlife Trusts to pursue wild beaver release license applications.

WITH ADDITIONAL THANKS TO...

The **European Climate Foundation** and **John Ellerman Foundation** supported our work around nature-friendly farming, enabling us to better help farmers to bring about nature's recovery through their land management practices. **King Charles III Charitable Fund** also backed our work to ensure that more land around the UK is managed in a nature-friendly way and that we are able to explore new opportunities for green finance. **Worwin UK Foundation** supported our work to protect and restore peatlands, which are home to rare wildlife and store huge amounts of carbon. **The Gatsby Charitable Foundation** enabled us to offer work placements to T-level students and **Zephyr Charitable Trust** supported our work with young people and the development of ways for them to be involved with The Wildlife Trusts.

ANONYMOUS FUNDERS

Thank you to all of our other funders who wish to remain anonymous for their support. Their generosity and donations are helping us to restore nature and protect wildlife at scale.

Work is underway to see beavers reintroduced into the wild thanks to support from our generous funders



© NICK UPTON

Our generous funders allow us to purchase land, such as Pentwyn Farm, to help nature's recovery



© STUART SMITH

Purchasing land for nature's recovery

In 2023, The Wildlife Trusts continued to acquire land to restore, protect and rewild, as part of our commitment to reach 30 by 30: 30% of land and sea, managed in a way that allows nature to recover, by the year 2030.

Acquiring land is an expensive and time-consuming challenge that is in part dependent on the generosity of our major donors and philanthropic lenders.

Philanthropic lenders have enabled Wildlife Trusts to rapidly purchase important land that has become available without the need to raise the funds first. This ensures the land can be used for nature recovery projects rather than being at risk from damaging construction and development projects that further reduce space for wildlife.

We would like to give a huge thank you to Julia Davies (We Have the Power), the pioneer of this type of philanthropic lending and all of our philanthropic lenders who have enabled **2,235 acres, at a cost of over £19 million**, to be secured for nature.

Thank you to all our funders, we couldn't do it without you!

Our corporate partners

Businesses have an important part to play in tackling the nature and climate crises. The Wildlife Trusts form partnerships nationally and locally with businesses that closely align with our values and mission.

Our partnerships have various imperatives: from facilitating landscape restoration and habitat creation to carbon sequestration, as well as bringing further impact in the form of employee, customer and community engagement with nature.

We bring strategic value to our partners through our ecological expertise and reach with local communities, and we help companies achieve regulatory compliance, fulfil Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) targets and transform value chains to be nature-friendly.

Some of the businesses we work with include:



JORDANS FARM PARTNERSHIP

Transforming the food supply chain to be nature positive

The Jordans Farm Partnership is a long-standing partnership between Jordans, The Wildlife Trusts and Linking Environment and Farming (LEAF). This year, the partnership supported 34 farmers who grow oats for Jordans Cereals to farm in harmony with nature. A core principle of the partnership is that an area equivalent to at least 10% of the farmed land is managed for wildlife, encouraging features like hedgerows, field margins and ponds, which enable wildlife to thrive and move through the landscape. As a result, the partnership has a positive impact on farmland species such as barn owls, brown hares, bats and vital pollinating insects like bees and butterflies.

As farmland covers 70% of the country, the way land is farmed is vitally important for the UK's nature. The Jordans Farm Partnership proves that by working with farmers, it is possible to grow food and make space for wildlife - it doesn't have to be one or the other. This partnership sets a standard for the entire industry, but crucially, it also shows just how much the growers care about the farmland species that live alongside them - collectively over 4,700 hectares to support wildlife on their farms.

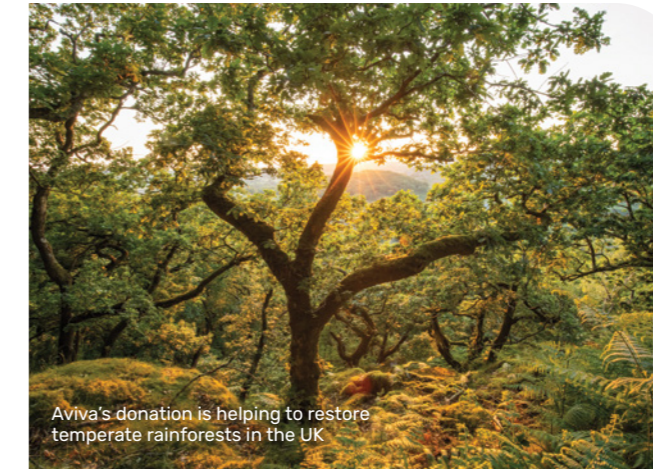


NATIONAL HIGHWAYS

Restoring habitats impacted by historic developments

Over a five-year partnership, Wildlife Trusts in England have been undertaking a wide array of projects as part of Network for Nature, from enhancing chalk downlands to support rare butterflies like the Duke of Burgundy, to conserving wetlands and rare chalk streams for endangered water voles. Some projects use nature-based solutions, such as reedbeds and ponds, to filter road run-off and prevent it from contaminating rivers or nature reserves. Network for Nature is also establishing wildlife corridors to reconnect areas fragmented by roads, allowing wildlife including pollinating insects to move and disperse across the landscape.

Initially funded with £6 million across 22 projects, Network for Nature has expanded to encompass four phases of funding totalling £11.5 million across 51 projects delivered by 24 Wildlife Trusts. Of these, 46 delivery projects will enhance, restore and create over 2,300 acres (950 hectares) of woodlands, grasslands, peatlands and wetlands throughout England. Five feasibility studies will also be conducted, designing landscape-scale projects focusing on increasing wildlife and connectivity. Between 2022 and 2024, 1,204 hectares of habitat have been restored, 169 hectares created, and 13,733 trees have been planted.



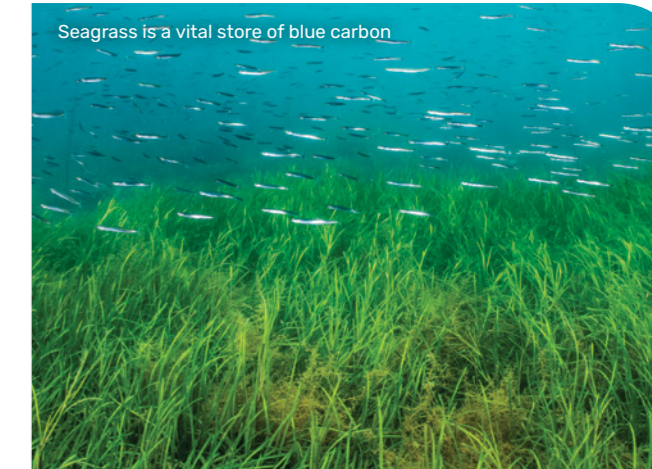
AVIVA

Rainforest restoration to meet ambitious environmental, social and governance goals

This exciting partnership between Aviva and The Wildlife Trusts is on an ambitious journey to restore and reconnect the remaining fragments of temperate rainforest across the British Isles, which now cover less than 1% of the UK land area. Going beyond traditional habitat restoration, the programme is working to establish entirely new woodlands across eligible sites.

Aviva's £38 million donation is enabling The Wildlife Trusts to secure land and establish rainforest (with area-appropriate native trees). These new sites provide authentic additionality and are being seen as a win for conservation, as well as being important hubs for collaboration. Local communities will be offered numerous opportunities to get involved, including employment, training and volunteering.

These new woodlands will sequester an estimated 800,000 tonnes of carbon over the next 100 years and will help to slow down the flow of water in local catchments, reducing flood risk and water pollution, creating havens for wildlife and great places to visit and live near.



SEASALT CORNWALL

Restoring seagrass for a resilient future

Seasalt Cornwall is donating £150,000 over three years to restore carbon-capturing seagrass along Cornwall's coastline, in partnership with Cornwall Wildlife Trust. The 'Seeding Change Together' project, launched during National Marine Week, focuses on restoring seagrass in the Fal Estuary, a vital habitat for capturing coastal blue carbon.

Using innovative technology, marine experts will test scalable restoration methods to address climate change. Seagrass, covering just 1% of the seafloor but accounting for 15% of the ocean's carbon capture, is a critical carbon sink, often outperforming rainforests. The project is initially focusing on research and development, including site surveys and water quality testing. Volunteers will later collect and plant thousands of seagrass seeds, helping to restore this essential ecosystem.



Biodiversity Benchmark

Everyone has a role to play in reversing the nature crisis. By managing the land they own in a wildlife-friendly way, businesses can take an important step in helping nature's recovery.



Since 2007, Biodiversity Benchmark has been helping landowning businesses become a positive force for nature's recovery in the UK. This unique certification scheme tests the design and implementation of a business's management systems to achieve continual biodiversity enhancement and protection on their landholdings.

Certification has been achieved across 48 sites covering 7,800 hectares of land managed by 14 organisations.

These organisations span sectors including business parks, leisure, transport, automotive, energy and aggregates.

CASE STUDY

Chineham Park

Frasers Property UK – Awarded February 2024

Chineham Park, a 7.6 hectare business park managed by Frasers Property UK, achieved The Wildlife Trust's Biodiversity Benchmark in early 2024, the culmination of over two years of dedicated management of the site for nature.

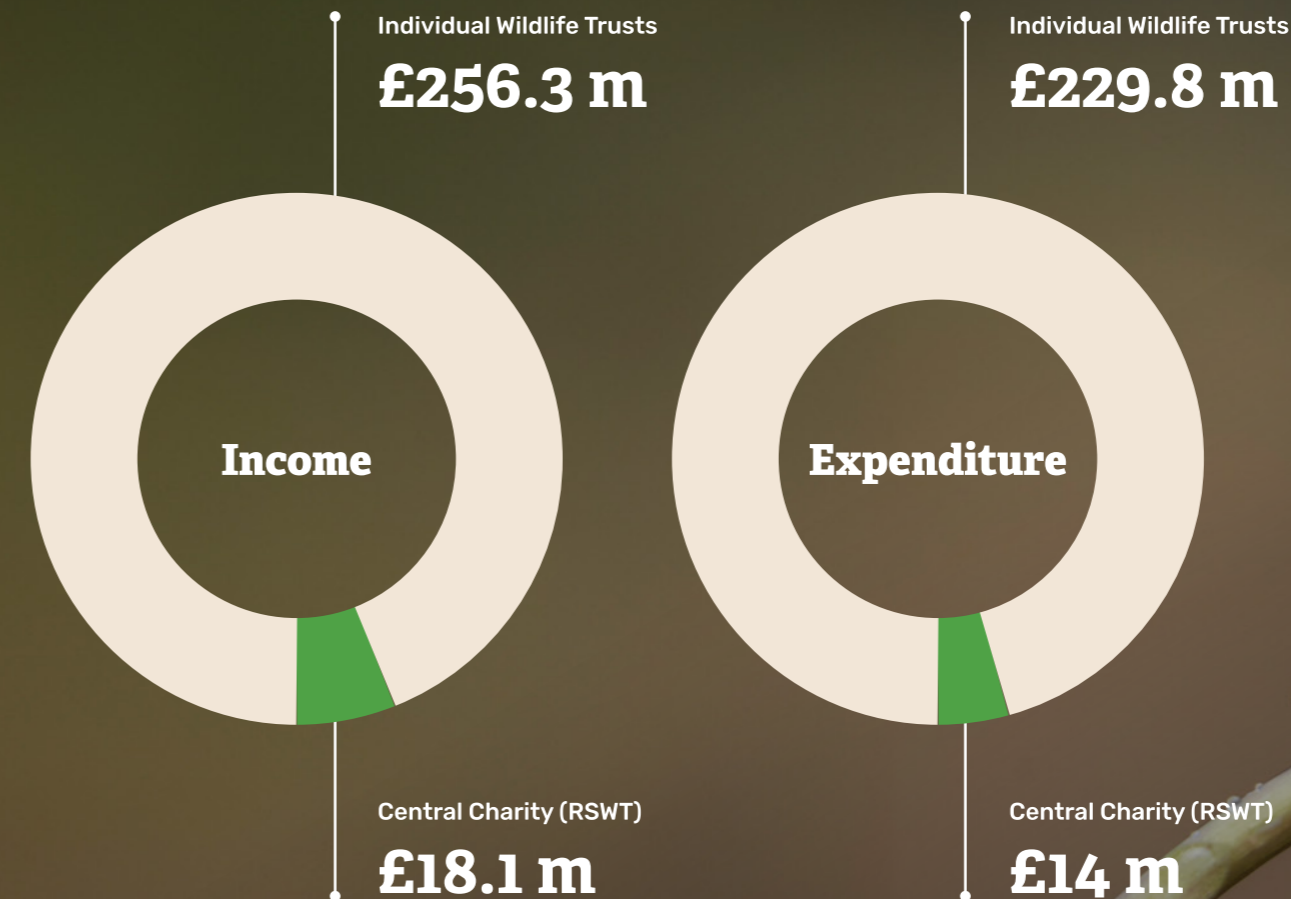
The park features diverse habitats including enhanced grasslands, woodlands, ponds, wildflower meadows and mature trees. This site supports a rich variety of species, such as lizard and bee orchids, nine species of bat, dormice, slow worms, butterflies and nine species of dragonflies.

Chineham Park has also forged partnerships with local ecological organisations to further enhance wildlife, including the Bumblebee Trust and The Newt Conservation Partnership. The ongoing work has brought noticeable benefits to the site's ecology, including increased wildlife presence and engagement with the tenants and owners.

Richard Hawkes, Estate Manager at Chineham Park, reflects on the achievement: *"The Biodiversity Benchmark has significantly enhanced our ecological value and sustainability practices, fostering community engagement and improving occupier well-being. It truly highlights our commitment to nature's recovery."*

Our collective finances

For the breakdown of the 46 individual Wildlife Trusts' accounts (top), and RSWT's accounts (bottom), please see the relevant organisation's annual reports, which are available on their respective websites.



This is 2023 data from 38 Wildlife Trusts, with the remaining eight using 2022 data as current data has not yet been supplied.

RSWT figures are for national work completed on behalf of The Wildlife Trusts federation.

Central charity income is from charitable trusts and foundations, grants, donations, society lottery, legacies and corporates.

Income for 2022-23 does not include £5.1 million for BIFFA Award.

Figures exclude inter-Trust grants and contributions.

The surplus for the year in RSWT is £4.1 million, which is made up of £0.4 million general unrestricted surplus and £3.7 million of restricted grant monies received, carried forward to subsequent accounting periods.

Similarly, the surplus for the rest of the federation is £22.4 million, of which £27.2 million is restricted grant monies carried forward to fund projects the money is intended for and the deficit for the year on unrestricted funds is £4.8 million.



Red squirrel



The
**Wildlife
Trusts**

The Wildlife Trusts are a federation made up of 46 Wildlife Trusts and a central charity (the Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts). Each is an independent charity with a shared mission.

Help us achieve our vision of 30% of land and sea to be connected and protected for nature's recovery by 2030...

- Join us as a member
- Remember us in your will
- Speak up for wildlife
- Volunteer your time
- Work with us

Get in touch...



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