



The
Wildlife
Trusts

Our
Year for
Wildlife
& *Climate*

The Wildlife Trusts' Impact Report 2022-2023

“I’m truly honoured to be part of The Wildlife Trusts’ family and have been so inspired by the extraordinary dedication of the federation and everyone I’ve met these past few years.

The challenges we face have been especially taxing of late, but we are stronger together. By nurturing collaborations and sharing our expertise across the 46 Trusts and beyond, we can continue to lead by example and make great progress for nature’s recovery, and I’m all the more committed to supporting you all in this endeavour.”

Liz Bonnin
President, The Wildlife Trusts



© TRAI ANFIELD

AUTUMNAL RIVER © BOB COYLE

Fighting nature's corner

As the stage is set for 2024 – a year expected to bring challenges and changes – The Wildlife Trusts forge forward, with a sense of pride for all that has been achieved over the last year and strong foundations in place to drive meaningful and positive action for wildlife and climate, determined to see the tide turn from nature loss to recovery.

Public support and desire for a healthy natural world has shown itself in a myriad of ways: from the amazing transformations of community spaces, driven by the communities themselves and cheered on by our Nextdoor Nature programme, funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund, to the stalling and defeat of nature-threatening parliamentary bills, thanks to successful campaigning work seeing people stand up for the wildlife they love. Support for The Wildlife Trusts continues to grow apace too, with more members and a growing volunteer base, establishing a real force for change.

Landscape-scale recovery led by The Wildlife Trusts stepped up another tier, as Aviva announced a £38 million donation to enable us to restore and recover Britain's lost temperate rainforests – thought to be the largest corporate donation for UK nature conservation to date. Their generous support will see the re-establishment of this once widespread and now almost non-existent habitat across parts of western Britain, with restoration of the first sites in Devon and Isle of Man already underway.

The Wildlife Trusts' Strategy 2030 stands us in good stead, with progress being made against the ambitious goals and transformations that as a federation we set ourselves. From addressing climate change through nature-based solutions and supporting farmers to deliver for wildlife, to promoting green social prescribing and community-based action for wildlife on the ground, we play a leading role in ensuring the value of nature is recognised and action is taken to recover it.

All of this is made possible thanks to the loyal support of you: our members, supporters, funders and partners. Your role in the fight against the nature and climate crises is vital. The battle is not yet over, but we head into 2024 buoyed by the successes of this year, and confident that there is much more we can achieve for the UK's wildlife and wild places.



Greg Benth

Chief Executive of
The Wildlife Trusts



Delham

Chair of
The Wildlife Trusts

A year for wildlife — Highlights from across The Wildlife Trusts

APRIL

2022



5,000 young people from disadvantaged areas in North and West Belfast benefitted from spending time outdoors through **Ulster Wildlife's** 'Wild Youth' project. Launched during Children's Mental Health Week in conjunction with the Belfast Hills Partnership, the project connected 11 to 25-year-olds with local green spaces to combat the substantial rise in mental health issues affecting young people in the area.

MAY



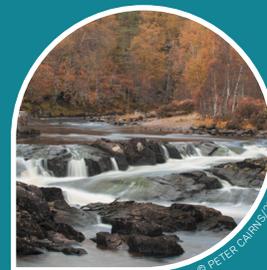
A partnership between **The Wildlife Trusts** and leading media infrastructure and advertising company Clear Channel brought green-roofed bus stops to urban locations across the UK. The 'living' bus stops will provide 'stepping stones' for wildlife in our towns and cities, where wild spaces are often limited, helping to directly address the severe decline in insect numbers. The five-year partnership saw 150 bus stops installed by the end of 2022, from Brighton to as far north as Glasgow.

JUNE



Staff at **Yorkshire Wildlife Trust** were thrilled when four rare black-winged stilt chicks hatched at the Potteric Carr Nature Reserve in Doncaster. Black-winged stilts don't breed in the UK every year, with a maximum of around 10 pairs breeding in some years – making this potentially the most northerly breeding success for this species ever in the UK. The team at the reserve worked hard to create ideal conditions for birds like the stilt, providing a green oasis amongst busy roads and industrial developments.

JULY



Riverwoods, a partnership initiative led by **Scottish Wildlife Trust**, received over £385,000 of initial funding from The National Lottery Heritage Fund to create a network of thriving riverbank woodlands and healthy river systems across Scotland. The five-year programme, requiring an estimated £2.9 million, will benefit people and wildlife by supporting land managers to restore river woodlands and provide communities and landowners with the tools to help them protect this critically important habitat long into the future.

AUGUST



Last summer, the **Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire** acquired Strawberry Hill, a unique Bedfordshire farm that had been left to rewild for the last 25 years and will now be protected into the future. Purchased with help from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and philanthropic lenders, it offers 150 hectares of flower-rich grassland, mature oak, ash and elm trees, and healthy populations of wildlife including birds such as nightingales, willow warblers and whitethroats.

SEPTEMBER



The Big Buzz! National Pollinator Conference & Fringe 2022 represented the UK's biggest ever gathering of pollinator enthusiasts and professionals. Hosted by the **Cumbria Wildlife Trust**-led Get Cumbria Buzzing! project, the sell-out event included keynote speakers such as author Professor Dave Goulson, and a number of workshops. Get Cumbria Buzzing! created pollinator-friendly havens along the A66 and A595 in northwest Cumbria, to help reverse the rapid decline in wild pollinators such as bees, butterflies and moths.

OCTOBER



Kent Wildlife Trust celebrated the unexpected birth of a baby bison, only a few months after introducing three female bison to West Blean and Thorndon Woods. The bison will act as ‘eco-engineers’, helping to restore the natural habitat, increase wildlife and combat climate change. The baby bison was the first in thousands of years to be born outside of a zoo in the UK. The herd was joined by a bull in December with the team in Kent now monitoring activity to establish how the grazing bison impact the woodland, in comparison to other areas where they are not present.

NOVEMBER



Staffordshire Wildlife Trust celebrated the successful completion of work undertaken as part of the Wilder River Churnet project, just over a year after it launched. This included a new drystone bridge at Thorswood Nature Reserve, two new ponds at Ladderedge Country Park, and large woody debris added to a stream at Black Brook Nature Reserve. The focus on natural processes is encouraging wildlife back, whilst retaining more water on site and reducing flooding in the area.

DECEMBER



The last ringed plover population in the Channel Islands resides in Alderney, so the team at **Alderney Wildlife Trust** was delighted when their surveys showed a record number of chicks fledging since monitoring work began in 2017. Fifteen nests were identified and over 50 eggs hatched, which indicates the site is established as a yearly nesting spot. Cordons were placed around the site by the Wildlife Trust in partnership with the States of Alderney, to better protect the chicks.

JANUARY

2023



Avon Wildlife Trust celebrated the success of their rewilding activities in North Somerset, thanks to the monitoring and survey efforts of 139 volunteers who attended 70 dedicated survey sessions. The North Somerset Rewilding Champions revealed increased flower and plant diversity, and higher numbers of insects in the areas surveyed. Local interest has been piqued too, with 30 public engagement sessions attracting 372 people keen to hear about their efforts.

FEBRUARY



Both **Herefordshire Wildlife Trust** and **North Wales Wildlife Trust** celebrated their 60th anniversary in 2023. Herefordshire celebrated by hosting a special members event, during which they announced they would be taking on management of Bartonsham Meadows, an iconic area by the River Wye. In North Wales, the Wildlife Trust launched their ‘60 Wild Things’ campaign, which celebrated 60 species, wild places, wildlife heroes and wild moments throughout the year.

MARCH



On World Rewilding Day (20th March), **London Wildlife Trust**, in partnership with the Mayor of London, announced the 22 recipients of the Rewild London Fund, which provides £850,000 of grants for projects in London. It included funding to bring beavers back to Ealing, a pollinator corridor in Thamesmead, creating more space for nature in Beckton Park, and Yeading Brook Unbound – a project that aims to reduce flooding, tackle scrub encroachment and invasive species on a stretch of the River Crane.



We are over 900,000 supportive members.
We are 3,600 dedicated employees.
We are 39,000 passionate volunteers.
We are 47 independent charities.
We are one 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, the 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 they live and work.

We manage over 2,600 nature reserves and 120 information centres, which attract 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. 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.



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.



From local to global

Delivering the UN 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 developing) 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 are 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 climate and nature emergencies, aligns with and directly supports progress towards the following six Sustainable Development Goals:



GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

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.



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, such as on the River Wye; and undertaking restoration work to improve these stressed habitats for wildlife and to provide nature-based solutions to societal issues such as flood and drought management.



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



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 nature and wildlife is at the forefront of urban development plans and part of the solution to societal issues.



LIFE BELOW WATER

We are actively campaigning for more Highly Protected Marine Areas in England to counter environmentally damaging activities, such as unsustainable fishing, trawling, development and pollution, which are harming marine life and impacting coastal areas and habitats.



CLIMATE ACTION

We are taking meaningful action for nature and the climate, influencing government at a local and national 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.



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 re-introducing missing keystone species to put nature into recovery at pace and at scale.

See the top of each page to see how the UN Sustainable Development Goals relate to our work.



OUR KEY STATS

**We manage
97,000 hectares
of land**

**More than
£33 million**
spent on water quality
improvement in our
streams and rivers

A total of
**2,676 hectares
of land**
has been improved for
nature thanks to Wildlife
Trust responses to
planning applications

The Wildlife Trusts have
been increasing their land
holdings, restoring nature
to more areas of the UK
and now manage nearly
**2,600 nature
reserves**

GOAL 1



Nature is in recovery

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

Landmark report, *State of Nature*, showed no let-up in nature's decline, with one in six species in Britain under threat of extinction. As one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world it is imperative that we put nature into recovery.

State of Nature also showed the hugely positive impact restoration and recovery projects can have for nature and people; and these are the focus of our work under Goal One: nature in recovery. We know that protecting existing nature is no longer enough, we need to create new space for wildlife, reintroduce missing 'keystone' species that have knock-on impacts for other wildlife, and help reboot our natural systems on land and sea.

Over the past year The Wildlife Trusts have worked together, using our collective power and influence, to secure land for rewilding, restore landscapes, and create partnerships and influential relationships with decision-makers, farmers and corporate supporters to create places where people and nature can thrive together.

- 1st October 2022 was an historic day for beavers in England. A new law came into force that recognised beavers as a native and protected species. Whilst Wildlife Trust efforts have seen beavers return to river systems across the UK, with the exception of the Devon and Scottish populations, these beavers are in fenced enclosures, so the next step is to see them reintroduced into the wild – helping to create healthy and thriving wetlands.

- **Warwickshire Wildlife Trust** announced the details of an ambitious £3 million project as part of the #TeamWilder initiative, funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund. The project, which aims to rewrite the future of Coventry's River Sherbourne, will enable the Trust to engage with over 25,000 people through volunteering, training, walks and other activities during the project's delivery. The Sherbourne is a river with a story to tell, and is rich in built, natural and cultural heritage, with precious habitats and wildlife. Warwickshire Wildlife Trust plans to reconnect people to this special river and the surrounding valley by making it more accessible along its length and offering immersive experiences to ignite imaginations and educate local people and schools.
- In July 2022, **Cornwall Wildlife Trust** launched a new and exciting project with Seasalt Cornwall to study and restore seagrass in the Fal Estuary. The three-year project aims to learn more about Cornwall's dwarf seagrass beds by conducting on-site research, including aerial surveys and water quality tests. Marine experts are trialling restoration methods that have never previously been used in Cornwall before, with the hope of expanding the size of the seagrass bed at the Trust's Fal-Ruan Nature Reserve. The first round of seagrass planting trials have been completed and the marine team are busy identifying the most effective methods for restoring and growing this vital, carbon-storing plant.





CASE STUDY: New Thames channel restoring nature

In the autumn of 2022, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust completed a groundbreaking £2 million project to create a new channel of the River Thames and restore long-lost wildlife habitat.

The 450-metre watercourse in West Oxfordshire bypasses a manmade weir and will enable fish to swim along a 30km stretch of the Thames and spawn for the first time in more than a century.

Created at the Trust's flagship Chimney Meadows Nature Reserve near Bampton, the channel is already being populated by native fish, birds and mammals.

Working with the Environment Agency, the Trust also created shallow temporary pools called scrapes near the channel. The project has re-established a naturally functioning floodplain – habitat that was once common across the UK but has been destroyed in many places as rivers were straightened and land was drained.

This wetland is now able to store floodwater for longer, helping to protect homes and land from flooding, which is predicted to worsen as a result of climate change. The Trust is also working in partnership with Bangor University and the Environment Agency who are undertaking research to demonstrate that active floodplains can store carbon and be part of the solution to the climate crisis.

Just a few months after the completion of the project, surveys found 450 fish of nine species in just 100 metres of the new channel. This is an outstanding result for a new water feature and a demonstration of the immediate and significant impact the careful restoration of the natural environment can have on endangered species.



RAINBOW TROUT © ALEX MUSTARD/2020DIVISION, CURLEW © TERRY WHITTAKER/2020DIVISION, CHIMNEY MEADOWS © PETER GATHERCOLE



CASE STUDY:

Landscape recovery in practice – working with the farming community

A new project exploring the future of farming in Cheshire launched in April 2022. Cheshire Wildlife Trust has been working in collaboration with Cholmondeley Estates to help shape Defra’s new Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS), which supports farmers’ efforts to integrate wildlife into their farming practices.

The scheme is aimed at landowners and managers who want to take a more radical and large-scale approach to producing environmental and climate positive goods on their land.

Cholmondeley Estate comprises 20 farms, with their landholding encompassing three Sites of Special Scientific Interest. The project is investigating how the Landscape Recovery Scheme could be used to connect these three core habitats through a network of buffers and wildlife corridors along hedgerows and watercourses within the farmed environment.

Cheshire Wildlife Trust’s Landscape Recovery Tests and Trials Project has engaged tenant farmers on the Estate through one-to-one discussions, workshops and events, to explore how the new schemes could be structured to deliver nature recovery within the farmed environment. As part of this project, the Cholmondeley Estate is also creating a demonstration site to investigate the economics of integrating ELMS with other nature-based investments, such as biodiversity net gain and carbon credits.

The project offers a demonstration and blueprint for how Wildlife Trusts can work in partnership with the farming community and deliver outcomes that benefit both nature and farming both now and in the future.

OUR KEY STATS

298,000 young people

took a stand for nature by taking part in a Wildlife Trust-led campaign for its recovery

593,000 people connected with nature

when they took part in 30 Days Wild during June

39,000 active volunteers

across the movement

114,000 young people

took part in Wildlife Trust led education sessions

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.

People need nature, and nature needs people. Too many communities have been disconnected from nature, and denied access to the health and well-being benefits that come with close proximity to green spaces and interaction with the natural world.

Young people and underrepresented groups are critical to tackling the nature and climate crises and The Wildlife Trusts are at the forefront of creating new opportunities to connect and empower them to campaign, take action as individuals and within their communities, and drive political and behavioural change. Together The Wildlife Trusts are developing new and innovative ways to engage with more diverse audiences.

- Funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund, Nextdoor Nature supports people to make a difference for nature and themselves. By working with community leaders, we are able to reach into some of our most under-served and nature-depleted communities, challenging social issues through the action of helping nature to recover.
- More than 30 schools signed up for **Sussex Wildlife Trust's** 'City of Meadows' project, which saw pupils, school staff and parents work together to create a mini wildflower meadow in their grounds to attract pollinators from the South Downs into the city. Funded by Brighton and Hove City Council, the project has resulted in the creation of

1,000 square metres of new wildflower meadow on school grounds, and provided hundreds of school children with the opportunity to take action for nature.

- In February 2023, The Wildlife Trusts released a new evidence report *HS2 double jeopardy: how the UK's largest infrastructure project undervalued nature and overvalued its compensation measures*, which revealed the fundamental flaws in the way HS2 Ltd has assessed and undervalued nature along the construction path of the project. In July, Wildlife Trust staff, accompanied by ambassador Cel Spellman, headed to 10 Downing Street to hand in an open letter, co-signed by over 100,000 people, asking ministers to recalculate the figures, so that the correct environmental compensation could be applied.
- Our Bright Future, an ambitious and innovative partnership led by The Wildlife Trusts, came to end in 2022 after eight years. The £33 million programme, funded by The National Lottery Community Fund, delivered 31 environment and nature-based projects across the UK, enabling young people aged 11 to 24 to gain vital skills, knowledge and experience, improve their well-being, take part in sustainable activities and increase their employability. Almost 130,000 young people were engaged, 355 wildlife and community spaces were created, 86% of participants said their mental health had improved, and 95% reported a boost in self confidence.





CASE STUDY:

Young People in Wales take a Stand for Nature

The 'Stand for Nature' project, which saw the five Welsh Wildlife Trusts come together in 2021 to tackle climate change with the help of young people in Wales, launched a Youth Manifesto in December 2022.

The manifesto 'Wildlife, Wales and the World', was created by a passionate group of young people from across Wales. It is a declaration of what young people in Wales want to see happen for nature and the climate, and to safeguard the future of biodiversity in Wales. Upon its launch, the manifesto was taken to COP15 in Canada by The Wildlife Trusts' Chief Executive Craig Bennett and used to highlight the need to reduce pesticide use in Wales.

The manifesto incorporates a range of key asks for the world and for Wales specifically, including a solid commitment to 30% of land and sea protected for nature by 2030 from all parties, an overhaul of food systems for the benefit of nature with measurable targets, a reduction in domestic and agricultural pesticide use by two-thirds in Wales, an increase in the number of green corridors and spaces for wildlife, and involving young people in all decision making.

The 'Stand for Nature' project is funded by The National Lottery Community Fund, and runs until 2024. The project is inspiring young people to become leading voices for nature and climate change, and providing the space and forum for people to work together to come up with solutions to our climate problems. It aims to achieve a Wales richer in wildlife, where habitats and landscapes capture more greenhouse gases and where young people influence their peers and communities to take positive action for nature.





CASE STUDY: Nextdoor Nature

Following its launch in 2022, Nextdoor Nature has been embedded throughout the movement, bringing communities together to help nature flourish where they live, work and socialise.

Thanks to £5 million funding from The National Lottery Heritage Fund, Nextdoor Nature has enabled each Wildlife Trust to employ at least one dedicated Community Organiser to their staff team, supporting the #TeamWilder approach to community organising and mobilising, and connecting local people with nature. The projects that have launched, or been supported by Nextdoor Nature, have helped communities re-engage and change their perspective in relation to their local environment, and brought wildlife and greenspaces back to places they had been lost.

Examples of Nextdoor Nature in action include **Derbyshire Wildlife Trust's** Society Place Project – a neglected green space in the heart of Derby which has been adopted by the local residents and a school, creating an oasis of planters and bug hotels; the **Scottish Wildlife Trust's** Pioneers Programme, which has trained two groups of community leaders so far, giving local residents the skills and knowledge to act for nature on behalf of their communities; and **Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust's** allotment training days, which teach members from local communities how to grow their own food, develop and maintain greener spaces in urban areas and have the confidence to pass on their knowledge to others.

In 2023, the Nextdoor Nature Hub website (nextdoornaturehub.org.uk) launched, providing a wide range of resources, guides, advice and support for communities looking to get their own project or activity off the ground.



POUND DIPPING © JO FOO. TREE PLANTING © ADAM DOSUNMU SLATER. SEED PLANTING © SOPHIE BELL



OUR KEY STATS

6,911 participants

on Wildlife Trust-led health and well-being programmes

Over 15.7 million people

spent time outdoors on a visit to a Wildlife Trust nature reserve

£2.6 million

spent on natural flood management through Wildlife Trust-led projects (an increase of £0.3 million from last year)

The Wildlife Trusts have achieved a

10% reduction

in our collective greenhouse gas emissions since 2019

GOAL 3



Nature is playing a central and valued role in helping to address

local and global problems.

The multiple challenges currently facing nature, and the ever-increasing speed with which our natural systems are collapsing, are impacting food, water, climate and the physical and mental well-being of people and communities, some of whom are the considered society's most vulnerable.

The natural world can provide its own solutions to combat the threats posed by habitat loss, soil erosion, flooding and drought and counter the global climate problems which humanity is wrestling with. It is our role to encourage and guide society towards these natural solutions and avoid further catastrophic losses.

The Wildlife Trusts are restoring natural ecosystems at scale, and demonstrating to decision-makers and stakeholders what is possible when nature-based solutions are implemented. We are using data, research and our collective influence to both educate and advise leaders, and planning ahead to ensure we are ready and equipped to react to changes in government and keep the momentum of our campaigning and policy work moving forward at pace.

- A £2.4 million peatland partnership between **Cumbria Wildlife Trust**, the National Trust and landowners is restoring heavily-degraded peat bogs across Lancashire and Cumbria, creating healthier habitats in the north of England and bringing the UK closer to its 2050 Net Zero goal. Restoration methods include blocking drains to re-

wet the ground, stabilising and revegetating bare peat to reduce erosion, and introducing sphagnum moss to start rebuilding the lost peat – all of which will ensure healthier peatlands sequester more carbon and play a vital role in tackling the climate crisis.

- In May 2022, **Durham Wildlife Trust** celebrated the impact of the 'Healing Nature' project, which saw an area the size of 133 football pitches given a new lease of life. Since its launch, the project has achieved a string of successes including the planting of 14,000 flower bulbs, three new acres of woodland, removing seven tonnes of discarded litter from the environment, and engaging with 1,650 local residents through guided walks and community events – 88% of whom said they were inspired to spend more time in nature.
- In December 2022, The Wildlife Trusts attended COP15 in Montreal, where world leaders came together to review the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity. We pushed for a legally binding global treaty to reverse wildlife loss, a commitment from the UK Government to make progress at home, and for the UK to provide effective financial and practical support to areas of the world that need it. A historic deal was agreed, which includes the adoption of a worldwide 30by30 target (30% protected for nature by 2030) and commits £30 billion a year to help developing nations safeguard wildlife.





CASE STUDY:

Turning the Tide to Save the Irish Sea

In October 2022, Manx Wildlife Trust, North Wales Wildlife Trust, Cumbria Wildlife Trust, Cheshire Wildlife Trust, Lancashire, Manchester and North Merseyside Wildlife Trust, Scottish Wildlife Trust, The Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales and Ulster Wildlife joined forces with Sustainable Water Network (Ireland) and the Northern Ireland Marine Taskforce to form the Irish Sea Network and press for action to protect the Irish Sea and all its inhabitants.

The Wildlife Trusts that came together to form the Irish Sea Network understood that working together was essential for achieving maximum impact. Wildlife does not adhere to lines drawn on maps, so thinking about the issue on a wider scale was vital to ensure appropriate and effective action was taken.

While 36% of the Irish Sea is designated as a Marine Protected Area, only 5% has any management in place and less than 0.01% is fully protected. With the Irish Sea under significant and increasing pressure from climate change and activities like fishing, shipping, recreational activity and pollution, the coalition of Wildlife Trusts based in and around the Irish Sea coastline produced the *Review of the Irish Sea 2022* – a vision of a protected Irish Sea rich in recovery from the decades of pollution, development, and loss of habitat that has impacted its biodiversity.

The report highlights the damage being done to the Irish Sea, and acts as a call to action for politicians and business leaders to work with conservationists to protect the sea and secure its future for the next generation. It also recognises that nature-based solutions are vital in addressing the challenges facing society, from storm surges to flooding.





CASE STUDY:

Bringing Back the Lost Atlantic Rainforests

In February 2023, The Wildlife Trusts announced the details of an ambitious new project to restore British temperate rainforests thanks to £38 million of funding from Aviva – believed to be the largest single corporate donation ever made for UK nature conservation.

The project is part of a wider programme of nature-based projects funded by Aviva to remove carbon from the atmosphere. It will improve biodiversity and climate resilience by working with communities to restore British temperate rainforests, which have largely been destroyed over many hundreds of years for timber, farming, transport networks and development. They now cover less than 1% of Britain in areas such as western Scotland, the Lake District and western Wales.

Creating and connecting wilder landscapes is fundamental for nature's recovery, combatting climate change and adapting to its impacts. This includes achieving UK net-zero targets, reducing the threat from extreme heat, flood and drought, and protecting at least 30% of land and sea for nature by 2030.

The project is well underway, with Wildlife Trusts identifying areas of land are suitable for native tree planting and natural regeneration, ensuring that any restored areas are as resilient as possible to increased heat, drought and fire as the climate changes. As well as being established in the wettest parts of the British Isles, tree species with reduced risk from wildfire have been identified. The projects will be monitored carefully to measure wildlife and climate adaptation benefits.

The first two locations to benefit from the funding are in North Wales and the Isle of Man, with plans to create new nature reserves across the whole of the west of the UK, as far down as Devon in the southwest, up to Cumbria and parts of Northern Ireland in the northwest.



Our Strategic

Supporting and developing Wildlife Trusts as strong and effective independent actors

Cornwall Wildlife Trust launched a huge fundraising campaign to raise £100,000 to rewild Helman Tor, one of the biggest wetland complexes in Cornwall. With the money raised, they intend to reintroduce grazing animals that would once have roamed free, including ponies, pigs and horned cattle, and are also looking to bring back beavers to re-engineer the waterways, attracting even more wildlife in!

Cornwall Wildlife Trust's campaign supports the collective vision to accelerate nature's recovery through land acquisition, rewilding, and species reintroduction. It is a project that embodies multiple aspects of Strategy 2030, and will have a direct impact on improving local nature systems while contributing to the goal of 30% of land protected for nature by 2030.

Wildlife Trusts are embracing the concept of 'working independently, together'. They have a clear and important role to play in challenging local threats to the environment, prioritising locally owned goals, and taking advantage of opportunities to aid nature's recovery.

Working effectively as a distributed network and collective movement

Gloucestershire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire Wildlife Trusts came together to lead Severn Treescapes, a large-scale project that aims to create a 60-mile corridor of trees, hedgerows and native woodland from the Lower Wye Valley and Forest of Dean in the south, to the Wyre Forest in the north, connecting both people and nature.

As well as helping wildlife to thrive, including the recently reintroduced pine martens, the programme supports a team of on-the-ground advisors to advise land managers, farmers and communities to access funding to plant, grow and manage trees and woodlands; and aims to encourage 5,000 people to grow native saplings at home to eventually plant in the local area.

Better connections between Wildlife Trusts are creating positive outcomes and new opportunities. Trusts are taking on larger-scale, big impact projects collaboratively, where resources and effort can be shared. The scope of what we do and what we believe is achievable is widening, and the barriers that presented challenges perceived as insurmountable in the past, are being tackled through an increase in the adoption of synergetic working practices.

Our five Strategic Transformations are the essential foundations for developing the collective capabilities of The Wildlife Trusts movement. The achievement of our three goals by 2030 is reliant on successfully transforming how we work together, support each other, inspire communities, embrace digital ways of working, and diversify our funding.

These are just a few examples of how Wildlife Trusts have been undertaking pioneering work, implementing new ways of working and embracing transformative technology to operate collaboratively and at pace.



Transformations



Inspiring community organising and mobilising, especially amongst young people

Many Wildlife Trusts have undertaken significant changes to improve engagement with young people, respond to their needs and aspirations, and involve them in decision making. A number of new networks have been established to bring young people together and to develop leaders of the future.

The Youth Revolution group, made up of staff working with young people, meets regularly to discuss ways to increase youth engagement, upcoming events and safeguarding. New young people networks within the movement include the internally-focussed Next Gen Nature group – a peer support network; and Generation Sea for young people within and outside of The Wildlife Trusts, which is driving forward action on all things marine.

New initiatives within individual Wildlife Trusts include **The Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire's** Young People's Forum for ages 13 to 23, **Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust's** 'Keeping it Wild' youth-led volunteer group, which manages its own reserve, and **London Wildlife Trust's** Youth Board scheme, which is providing training and mentoring to 16 to 25-year-olds who want to play a part in the future of London's wild spaces.



Undergoing a 'root and branch' digital transformation

In 2022, a three-year £1.2 million project involving the University of Surrey and **Surrey Wildlife Trust** launched. Funded by the players of People's Postcode Lottery, the Space4Nature programme uses the latest satellite earth observation imagery and artificial intelligence to help map and assess the quality and quantity of wildlife habitats across the county, to create, restore and connect fragmented wildlife areas and support healthier and thriving wildlife.

Collectively, The Wildlife Trusts are shifting towards using a common Geographic Information System (GIS), which will facilitate access to high quality spatial data on nature recovery networks, habitat condition and more, enabling better collaboration between Wildlife Trusts and our partners.

Digital transformation is underpinning the entire Wildlife Trusts' programme and delivery of Strategy 2030, from scaling up our fundraising and how we manage our volunteers, to making better use of the vast amounts of data we hold. Wildlife Trusts are beginning to embrace and integrate the necessary culture, structures and technology to increase their capabilities, engage with new audiences and maximise the impact of their work.



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

One year into **Dorset Wildlife Trust's** Wild Woodbury community rewilding project at Bere Regis and surveys have recorded an uplift in the biodiversity and abundance of species moving onto the 170 hectare site.

Since the land was acquired in 2021 through philanthropic lending, it has been allowed to naturally regenerate with remarkable results. Staff and volunteers recorded over 1,300 species in the summer of 2022 and eight Red List birds of conservation concern have been confirmed to be breeding at Wild Woodbury. The project is an exemplar for sustainable land use to tackle the climate and ecological crises, open up more public access to the land for the community and restore natural processes across the site to make more space for nature.

The Wildlife Trusts are transforming their approach to raising funds for growth and development, large scale projects and land acquisition. From digital membership recruitment through to loans for rapid land purchases, new business models and alternative sources of capital and financing, Wildlife Trusts are able to scale-up their approach for nature's recovery.



Our Enabling

BEACH PICNIC © LEIA MORRISON; OTTER © ANDY ROUSE/2020VISION; VOLUNTEERS © MATTHEW ROBERTS

Getting our own house in order

The five Enabling Priorities represent the important foundations we need in place to enable us to realise our strategic goals and achieve our transformations. They underpin our collective ability to accomplish our vision of a thriving, natural world.

Wildlife Trusts have been making changes to understand and improve their own environmental footprint, expanding and connecting their nature reserves, developing policies that present a strong and unified voice for nature, investing in their people, and coming together as one movement to grow our voice for nature.

In July 2022, The Wildlife Trusts published 'Changing Nature', the first-ever climate change adaptation report produced by the federation. This represented the beginning of a collective commitment to publish regular adaptation reports that examine the impacts and risks associated with the changing climate across our land holdings. It also outlined the actions that we will take in the future to help nature adapt.

We intend to publish annual updates to the adaptation report to ensure our contribution to tackling the climate crisis is authentic and transparent, and lead by example in the eyes of our employees, supporters and local communities.

Wildlife Trusts are working together to find solutions for carbon emissions reduction, the use of chemicals on land, renewable energy generation, and greener methods of operating; from the suppliers we engage with to the vehicles we use to access our projects, we are setting ambitious targets to ensure our own house is in order.

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

In October 2022, **Durham Wildlife Trust** marked its half-century by unveiling its 50th nature reserve. The Wildlife Trust launched its '50@50' campaign in 2020 – aiming to grow its number of nature reserves from 42 to 50 by the end of its 50th anniversary year.

Cuthbert's Moor, a 300-acre site in Teesdale, marks a significant step forward in achieving the wider objective of protecting 30% of land and sea for wildlife by 2030. With nature reserves increasingly becoming the last remaining fragments of wildlife habitat within a degraded landscape, the acquisition of land, within a wider programme of working with neighbouring land managers, is key to nature's recovery.

Wildlife Trusts manage some of the best nature reserves and wildlife habitats in the UK and Crown Dependencies. They are extending and connecting them up, to create larger and more robust spaces for wildlife to thrive and for people to connect with nature.



Priorities



Develop clear and consistent evidence-based policies.

Evidence tells us that nature is critical to tackling health and well-being issues, and most notably the mental health crisis that is crippling the NHS. Data and analysis from community programmes delivered across the federation clearly indicate that Wildlife Trust programmes are helping to tackle depression, anxiety and social isolation, and have a role to play in improving the mental and physical health of those in our local communities.

Wild at Heart, delivered by **Sheffield and Rotherham Wildlife Trust** runs nature-based activities and helps people learn new skills, and resulted in healthcare cost savings of over £38,000 in one year. Feed the Birds, a **Shropshire Wildlife Trust** programme that addresses social isolation and loneliness, accumulated benefits of over £102,000 over 31 months. And Wild Health, A **Gwent Wildlife Trust** scheme that provides opportunities for recreational, social, and work-based outdoor activities to promote emotional and physical well-being, delivered healthcare savings of over £66,000.

The utilisation of high-quality data, local expertise and technical analysis supports our commitment to take a clear and confident position for nature. This evidence-led approach ensures we remain a credible, authentic, and a trusted voice for nature.



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

Avon, Devon, Dorset, Somerset and Wiltshire Wildlife Trusts celebrated the conclusion of their three year Wild Paths trainee scheme, funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund, which saw 30 trainees successfully complete placements.

The 10-month placements gave people from diverse background the opportunity to gain experience in people engagement and practical conservation, gaining qualifications along the way and building professional relationships. For many this led to new career opportunities, securing Wildlife Trust roles including land advisory officer and wilder learning assistant, as well as elsewhere within the environmental charity sector.

The challenges we face now, and in the future, will require more skilled and trained staff, particularly in emerging fields such as land management advice, community action and well-being. Wildlife Trusts are planning ahead, focusing on upskilling existing staff and volunteers, increasing the diversity of the workforce and trustees, engaging with young people, and mobilising our volunteer and supporter networks to increase the ways in which they can contribute to nature's recovery.



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

At the beginning of 2023, **Kent and Essex Wildlife Trusts** ran local campaigns, side-by-side, to oppose plans to create the Lower Thames crossing, linking Kent with Essex. The proposed £9 billion scheme threatens ancient woodland and a Site of Special Scientific Interest, which is home to threatened and rare species such as dormice and great crested newts.

The campaigns highlighted the serious detrimental environmental impacts, targeting issues of concern to their respective local communities and joining together with the Woodland Trust to generate wider media coverage on the level of opposition to the crossing.

Wildlife Trusts are building on their strong, local status as the credible voice for nature and are able, and best placed, to act quickly and decisively to counter any actions that threaten the wild spaces in their communities. When acting alone is appropriate, they are strong and effective local guardians. When joined up thinking and information sharing is required, they are now, more than ever, calling on the strength and support of each other, to utilise the power and influence of The Wildlife Trusts as a collective force.

Thank you to our funders

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 help from The Wildlife Trusts, people are helping nature to recover right on their doorstep, through hundreds of community-driven projects.

This year, The National Lottery Heritage Fund also supported us to explore how digital technologies and innovation could help more people to access and enjoy nature with The Wildlife Trusts.

ESMÉE FAIRBAIRN FOUNDATION

The Esmée Fairbairn Foundation has supported our work to restore nature on land and at sea, in particular 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, The Esmée Fairbairn Foundation leases the land to Wildlife Trusts for them to buy within two years' time, allowing an opportunity to fundraise. Between April 2022 to March 2023 the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation approved a £1 million application from Sheffield & Rotherham Wildlife Trust to purchase Ughill Farm.

Golden Plovers
thrive at Ughill Farm



PEOPLE'S POSTCODE LOTTERY

We would like to thank players of People's Postcode Lottery for their generous support over many years. This year, funding raised by the 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. Players also supported outdoor education sessions for children and young people in urban areas, and our Wild LIVE events, where guests discussed important issues affecting nature.

In addition, the funding supported our LGBTQ+, mental health and disability staff networks and the work of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) 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 to restore nature across large areas of land, including bringing back missing keystone species that help to create habitat for a diverse range of wildlife.

WITH ADDITIONAL THANKS TO...

The **European Climate Foundation** and **John Ellerman Foundation** supported our work to help farmers help nature, through nature-friendly farming practices. **The Prince of Wales's Charitable Fund** supported our work to ensure that more land around the UK is managed in a nature-friendly way.

ANONYMOUS FUNDERS

We would also like to thank two grant funders who would like to remain anonymous. The first has supported our work to protect and restore damaged peatlands, which are vital allies in tackling the climate crisis and providing a home to rare and endangered wildlife.

The second has supported our work on digital transformation, which will enable the Wildlife Trusts movement to work more efficiently and effectively to restore nature and to help people take action to address the nature and climate crises.

Old Whittington: a new Derbyshire
Wildlife Trust site to be rewilded

Purchasing land for nature's recovery

In 2022, 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 reduces 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!*

Businesses we work with

We are proud to work with selected national businesses that closely align with our values and mission in helping to tackle the climate and nature crises with people inspired and empowered to take action for nature's recovery.

Through these relationships we are restoring landscapes and improving natural habitats that can absorb emissions, reduce risks such as flooding, underpinning sustainable farming and creating more space for nature in urban areas and engaging thousands of customers and employees with wildlife. Together, we are setting a course for a brighter healthier future and sustainable business platform on which to manage risk and build business, environmental and social resilience. Businesses are also increasingly looking to play a leading role in bringing nature closer to where people live and work for the health and well-being benefits that this brings; Wildlife Trusts provide a wealth of opportunities for individuals within businesses and their communities to access green spaces and interact with the natural world.

Some of the businesses we work with include:



Hogan Lovells' employees took part in their bi-annual 'Legally Ballroom' dance competition which raised an astonishing £51,000 for The Wildlife Trusts!



HOGAN LOVELLS

We are proud to have been selected as Hogan Lovells' official charity partner for the past four years (2020–2023).

From the beginning of our partnership in 2020, up to March 2023, Hogan Lovells' colleagues provided over 1,000 hours of pro bono legal advice to further support our work, contributing to a total of 3,373 responsible business hours to help put nature into recovery, as well as raising over £233,000 through fundraising initiatives.

At least 1 in 4 of Hogan Lovells' employees across their two UK offices in London and Birmingham have taken meaningful action for nature by volunteering their expertise and time to support our Strategy 2030. From committing valuable pro bono legal advice in relation to high impact, landscape-scale programmes enabling nature to play a central and valued role in helping to address local and global problems, to taking part in 'Wild Work Days' to conserve habitats on the ground, to learning about the interlinked nature and climate emergencies.

JORDANS

The Wildlife Trusts and Jordans have worked in partnership since 2015, joining forces to produce an industry-leading wildlife standard that commits to farming in harmony with nature.

34 Jordans farmers works with an expert farm advisor from their local Wildlife Trust. The advisor develops a comprehensive and bespoke plan for supporting nature on their farm, which includes the protection and management of at least 10% of the farmed land for wildlife. All of the farmers growing oats for Jordans manage their land to support bees and pollinators. They provide flower-rich field margins and maintain flowering hedgerows to provide food sources throughout the year.

SIEMENS PLC

Since 2015 we have worked in partnership with Siemens Plc. They are supporting us with net zero initiatives and contributing to our Strategy 2030. Siemens are helping us to reduce our scope 1 and 3 greenhouse gas emissions and donated value in kind consultancy to examine the feasibility of installing electric vehicle charging points across Wildlife Trust nature reserves and visitor centres.

"Deploying EV charging technology represents an important enabler towards achieving our overall purpose of providing meaningful action for nature and climate. But it will also futureproof us – local people love visiting our wild places and these are also major visitor attractions. Charging availability is likely to influence where many people choose to spend their time in the coming years and beyond."

Rachel Hall,
Climate and Nature-Based
Solutions Officer, The Wildlife Trusts





BEE HOTEL AT CERTIFIED SITE © SES WATER



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 be 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 52 sites covering 8,500 hectares of land managed by 13 organisations.

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

CASE STUDY:

SES Water

In 2022, SES Water achieved a new Biodiversity Benchmark for Fetcham Springs Leatherhead, joining Elmer Water Treatment Works and Young Street Borehole site, which was awarded the Benchmark in 2020.

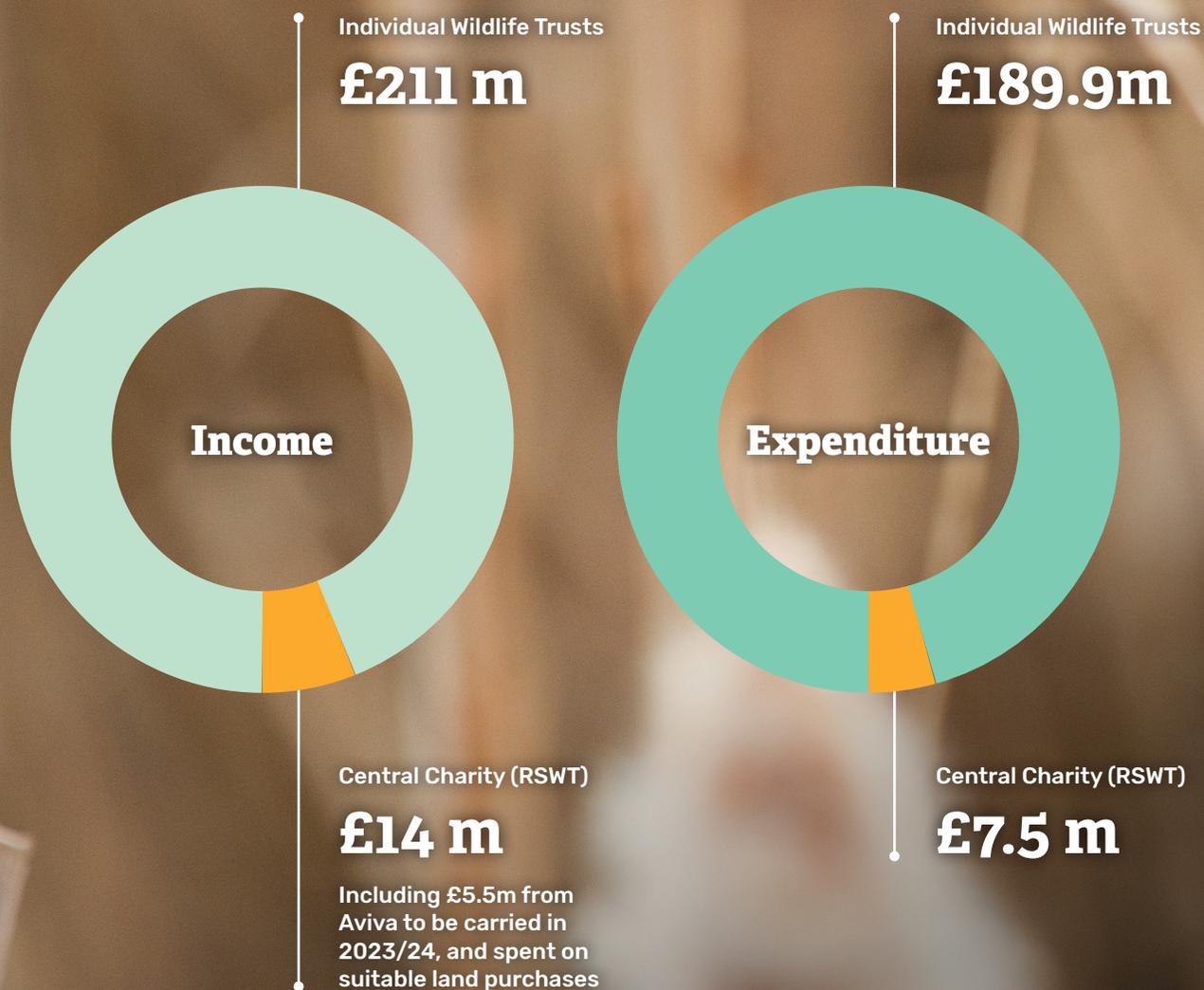
The two sites cover 16 hectares and supply drinking water to the Mole Valley in Surrey. The award recognises the diverse array of habitats on site, managed by SES Water including grassland, semi-natural woodland, hedgerows, dense scrub and a spring-fed lake. These habitats are home to lots of wildlife, including butterflies, dormice, badgers, lizards and slow worms. SES Water are now working towards achieving the Biodiversity Benchmark at Bough Beech Reservoir in Kent.

"Our commitment to reducing the environmental impact of the essential service we provide is industry leading and our clear Biodiversity Action Plan ensures the careful management of habitats needed for wildlife to thrive, now and in the future."

Tom Kelly, SES Water Wholesale Director

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.



Individual Wildlife Trusts

£211 m

Income

Central Charity (RSWT)

£14 m

Including £5.5m from Aviva to be carried in 2023/24, and spent on suitable land purchases

Individual Wildlife Trusts

£189.9m

Expenditure

Central Charity (RSWT)

£7.5 m



This is 2023 data from 30 trusts, with the remainder using 2022 data as current data has not yet been supplied.

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

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

Income for 2022-23 does not include £4.6m for BIFFA Award, and £0.5m for Our Bright Future.

Figures exclude inter-Trust grants and contributions.



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...



enquiries@wildlifetrusts.org



[instagram.com/thewildlifetrusts](https://www.instagram.com/thewildlifetrusts)



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[wildlifetrusts.org](https://www.wildlifetrusts.org)



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