



**Berkshire
Buckinghamshire
& Oxfordshire**
Wildlife Trust

Our Impact Report

2023-24

More nature everywhere, for everyone

Working together for a **wilder future**

Welcome to our Impact Report for 2023–24, showcasing some of the highlights that your support has helped us to achieve during the year.

This is the third year of our five-year strategic plan, “*Wilder*”, which has one simple overarching aim: to create more nature everywhere, for everyone.

Thanks to the generous support of our members, funders and partners, we have inspired more people to take action for nature and continued to protect and restore nature on our reserves and beyond.

It’s vital that our vision for a wilder future in Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire becomes reality. Put simply, no nature, no future. Your support helps us to work towards our aim of 30% of the land across our three counties to be well managed for nature by 2030.

Thank you for sharing our commitment to nature’s recovery.

With our best wishes,



George Levvy

George Levvy Chair



Estelle Bailey

Estelle Bailey Chief Executive

Berkshire, Buckinghamshire & Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust September 2024

Our work protects and restores the natural world, and connects people with wildlife

Our vision

More nature everywhere, for everyone

Our mission

To bring about nature’s recovery through local action

To achieve our *Wilder* vision, we have three main goals:

- 1 Put nature into recovery
- 2 Empower people to act for nature
- 3 Secure our future

DARREN PRESTOE



GEORGE LEVY & ESTELLE BAILEY – CHRIS DEENEY. COVER IMAGE – HARRY BERKS

“There is nothing more important than supporting our natural world at this time of crisis. So proud to support the Wildlife Trusts.”

Andrew Blake, donor to BBOWT’s Nature Recovery Fund

Our impact in numbers

Your support helped us achieve all this and more in 2023-24



£564,786 of external funding secured for five new conservation projects including reconnecting adder populations at Greenham Common and restoring the Upper River Ray meadows

Read more about what we've achieved during 2023-24 thanks to your support in our full Annual Report and Accounts at bbowt.org.uk/publications



60,000+ members, another new high



Delivered wildlife-friendly land management advice over **4,258 ha**



364 pieces of local and national media coverage



Worked with partners including Buckinghamshire Council, the Floodplain Meadows Partnership, Chilterns National Landscape, local councils and landowners



2 habitat banks up and running at Duxford Old River and Ludgershall Meadows, generating funds to restore nature



1,700 volunteers



937 campaigning Wildlife Ambassadors



The Oxfordshire Wildlife Sites project provided specialist management advice to **35** Local Wildlife Sites



7 projects were successfully completed



321 sites were surveyed for water voles, an increase in the total area of Local Key Areas seen for the first time since 2018



10.5% increase in social media followers



86% of planning applications responded to by BBOWT have been withdrawn, refused or amended with improved considerations for wildlife



Delivered conservation projects across a total area of **97,084 ha**

Putting nature into **recovery**

Our nature reserves are at the heart of our plans for Nature Recovery Networks that join up landscapes so wildlife can thrive

BOWT secured significant funding for five new conservation projects on our nature reserves in addition to the 10 projects that were already running. Seven projects were successfully completed including the project celebrating our Dancersend Nature Reserve as one of the original Rothschild reserves and work to improve the woodland habitat for dormice at Little Linford Wood. We thank our volunteers for their contribution to these projects and across our nature reserves.

New and innovative conservation techniques are being used in some of the new projects to help species and habitats recover. The 'Adder Connections' project at Greenham Common will connect fragmented adder populations using 'snake tunnels' to overcome the barriers that roads present on the common. The concept and design of the tunnels has been taken from elsewhere in Europe and is thought that it is the first time it has been implemented in the UK. Success of the project will be monitored by further radio tracking of the adder populations.

This year, we completed the three-year West Berkshire 'Wild Verges' project. Using volunteers, we surveyed 33% of the rural verge network in West Berkshire. A report was provided to West Berkshire Council detailing the state of verges, providing a management plan for the whole rural verge network and individual management plans for all 36 roadside nature reserves to benefit the biodiversity of the roadside verges.

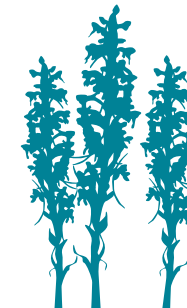


“We are proud to continue the work that Charles Rothschild started on the site, which represents a historic turning point in the way that our society interacts with the natural environment. As our entire planet rallies to tackle the problems of global climate change and ecological damage, there has never been a better time to recognise the importance of this modest patch of woods and grassland in the English countryside.”

The Rothschild Foundation, funder of the Dancersend project



303 female glow-worms observed glowing at Whitecross Green Wood – a record count



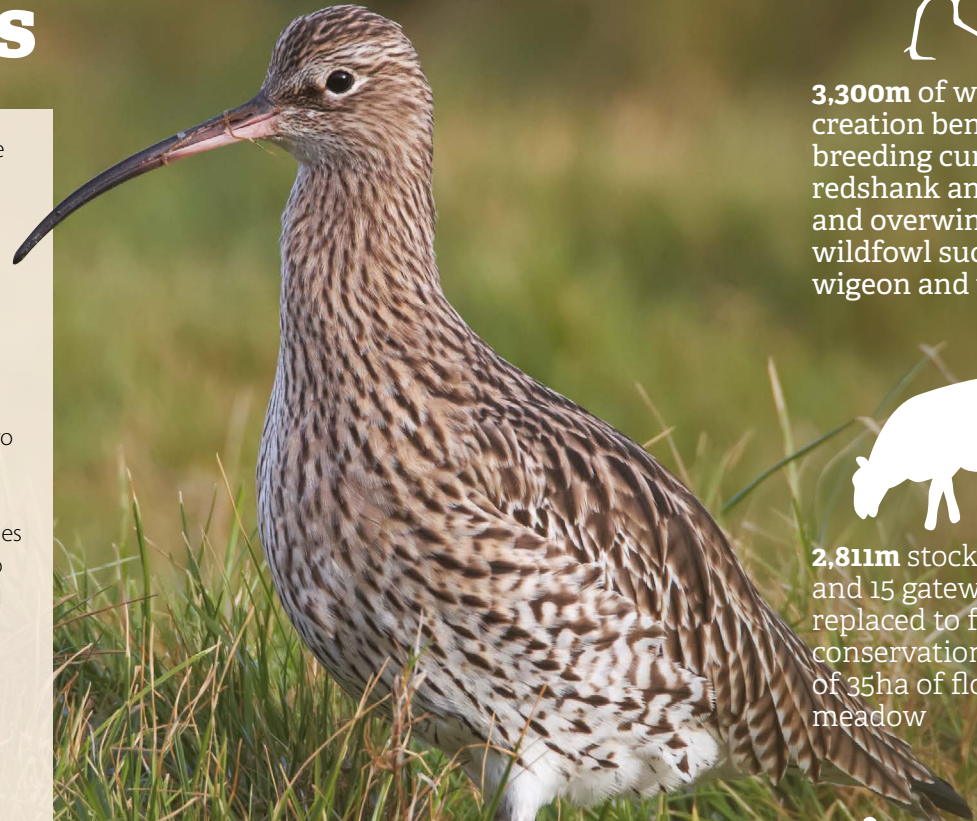
20,000 chalk fragrant orchid spikes counted at Aston Clinton Ragpits



200 brown hairstreak eggs counted at Leaches Farm, part of Upper Ray Meadows



Spotlight on creating habitat for curlews



3,300m of wader scrape creation benefiting breeding curlew, redshank and lapwing and overwintering wildfowl such as wigeon and teal



2,811m stock fencing and 15 gateways replaced to facilitate conservation grazing of 35ha of floodplain meadow



1,500m of anti-predator fence installed and 1,000m replaced to protect 22ha of habitat for breeding waders including lapwing, redshank and curlew

A grant from the FCC Communities Foundation and numerous donations from individual supporters is enabling BBOWT to create habitat for endangered curlews and other birds at Gallows Bridge Farm, part of Upper Ray Meadows nature reserve on the Buckinghamshire/Oxfordshire border. BBOWT has seen curlews nest at Gallows Bridge Farm for years, but their numbers are limited by predators. Now we are creating bespoke habitat to allow the birds to breed in safety. The project will also benefit other ground-nesting birds such as skylarks, meadow pipits and yellow wagtails.

The team will create 30 new pools called 'scrapes' which curlews can bathe and feed in. Overwintering wildfowl such as wigeon, teal, snipe and golden plover will also benefit from the wetland, along with insects such as dragonflies.

We will also cut back or 'coppice' huge amounts of hedgerow: this will create a more

open habitat that curlews prefer because there are fewer places for birds of prey to perch and nest. This work will also benefit one of Britain's rarest butterflies – the brown hairstreak – which will lay its eggs on new shoots as the hedges grow back.

Elsewhere, new anti-predator fences will create enclosed nesting areas where foxes and badgers can't reach other vulnerable ground-nesting birds. These areas will be perfect for two threatened species – lapwing and redshank.

Finally, during the breeding season, we are working with volunteers from the Upper Thames Waders Group and use night-vision cameras to see how the breeding birds are getting on and exactly what threats they are facing.

Read more about the project at bbowt.org.uk/news/rare-birds-get-ps230k-home-improvements-their-own-security-cameras

"We're delighted to be supporting the Upper Ray Meadows Wetland Restoration Project and excited about the plans the Trust has in place to improve the nature reserve for wildlife and visitors alike. FCC Communities Foundation is always happy to consider grant applications for projects that aim to protect a particular species or habitat and we're looking forward to this one making a difference to the endangered curlew population very soon."

Penny Horne, FCC Communities Foundation

Empowering people to **act for nature**

By reaching new audiences and giving people the tools they need to restore nature in their own neighbourhoods we will achieve our vision of more nature everywhere

Our Education Centres continue to thrive with our formal and informal learning activities for all ages. During this year we delivered two projects to broaden and diversify our impact. In partnership with West Berkshire Council, our Wild West Berkshire project focussed on the 'one health' model. Collaborating with two schools we promoted the integral link between the food system and nature. Additionally, supported by The Robert Pilgrim Photographic Trust, our Youth and Nature Photography project enabled eight young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to learn more about photography and benefit from a nature connection.

Our Nextdoor Nature activities continued in Slough and Reading, co-designing activities with community groups and enabling communities to do more for nature in their spaces including St Paul's Church, The Parvaaz Project and The Ujala Foundation.

In Maidenhead, our Engaging with Nature activities enabled vulnerable people to benefit from nature to improve their health and wellbeing.

Our community organising activities also continued in Bicester and Banbury, working with communities to promote nature connection with a variety of walks and talks, and upskilling local people to do more for nature on their patch.

We are also working with the local authorities across our three counties on Local Nature Recovery Strategies to ensure they help contribute to creating new habitats and restoring existing habitats, as well as targeting resources where they will have the biggest impact for nature.



“Thank you so much for including Sophia on the course, it’s given her so much more confidence and drive to get out of her comfort zone and explore the outside. It’s been great to see the transformation... She’s loved it and it’s still all she wants to talk about.”
Chris Harrison, whose nine-year-old daughter Sophia joined the Youth and Nature Photography course



400 children benefitted from our bursary programme providing fully funded visits for schools from economically disadvantaged areas



5,000+ people in our three counties signed up to be part of 30 Days Wild, taking action for nature each day in June



10.5% increase in social media followers



Spotlight on working with local communities

Our Rough Around the Edges project in the Chilterns, part of the Chalk, Cherries and Chairs Landscape project with the Chilterns Conservation Board and funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, wrapped up having worked with communities in the area for the last five years. Over this time, we have worked with 40 groups at 45 sites, delivering 21 fully funded projects across the central Chilterns.

Small, wildlife-rich areas can be just as important as big ones – and by improving and connecting these little islands of nature we can help wildlife recover across the central Chilterns. Examples of sites the project worked on includes community gardens, woodlands, churchyards, allotments, ponds and watercourses, and meadow areas.

Some of the organisations the project worked with benefitted from the distribution of more than 700 plants, trees and shrubs from The Wildlife Trusts' Wilder Spaces show garden at RHS Malvern Spring Festival. The garden, which BBOWT and Future Nature helped to create, won Best in Show, a gold medal, Best Construction Award and the prestigious People's Choice Award, earning national acclaim and featuring on BBC Gardeners' World. After the show, the plants were distributed amongst a range of community groups, charities and parishes we work with.

Find out more:
bbowt.org.uk/rough-around-edges

“I think this has been such a brilliant project and I hope BBOWT can do something like this again – advice, funding, training and networking are so important for small local organisations... Your support was absolutely crucial to us as an organisation.”

Wild Amersham group, supported through the Rough Around The Edges project



21 community projects



Collaborated with **41** groups



45 sites supported

Securing our future

Growing and diversifying our network of supporters will enable us to expand our work across Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire

If BBOWT is to deliver its ambitions for wildlife across the coming years it is critical that our finances, people and infrastructure are resilient to the challenges we face within our operating environment. We must prepare ourselves for unforeseen circumstances and ensure that we respond flexibly to a dynamic world.

As part of this, we launched our first multi-year fundraising campaign, the *Nature Recovery Fund*, with a stated aim of raising up to £3m over the next three years for our work for nature, climate and people.

We remain inspired by and incredibly grateful to all our donors and supporters. Our commitment is to maximise the resources that we have to ensure that they deliver the greatest possible impact for nature.

Despite concerns on the impact of the cost of living on our supporters, our membership has reached another highest-ever level of over 60,000 members, demonstrating the importance of nature to so many people in our three counties.

We also offer a huge thank you to all our volunteers who help us on our nature reserves, at our visitor and education centres, in our offices and beyond.



220 new volunteers recruited during the year



£3m Nature Recovery Fund launched



2 new 'Your Wild Memories' butterfly plaque walls installed at the Nature Discovery Centre and College Lake

“BBOWT is launching its biggest ever appeal with an ambitious goal. We want to bring nature back – it’s that simple. In our countryside, our towns, and our villages – we want to give nature a fighting chance.”

Steve Backshall, BBOWT’s president, on the launch of the Nature Recovery Fund





Spotlight on Biodiversity Net Gain

When Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) became mandatory in early 2024 BBOWT was well placed to launch two of the first habitat banks in our three counties. Our Duxford Old River site in Oxfordshire and Ludgershall Meadows in Buckinghamshire are now subject to legal agreements with their respective local authorities which enables us to sell units from them to generate funds to restore habitats on the sites.

Our habitat banks are being designed and developed by our own team of ecologists and nature reserve managers to create and enhance habitats and make new spaces for wildlife. They are close to our existing nature reserves creating more connected landscapes across our nature recovery network. Sites will be managed by BBOWT not just for the 30-year mandatory period, but forever, leaving a real legacy for wildlife.

We will re-establish long-term hay meadow management at Ludgershall Meadows to restore the natural diversity of plants, which will in turn support greater abundance of insects and birds to further enhance and extend our Upper Ray Meadows nature reserve. The mosaic of key floodplain habitats created and enhanced at Duxford Old River will support wildfowl, waders, songbirds and specialist wetland invertebrates.

BNG is a new approach to ensure future residential and commercial development contributes towards nature's recovery. Developers must ensure the land they use is left in a better condition for wildlife than before work started. If it isn't, new habitats must be created offsite.

Income generated from BNG will be used for the development and management of our habitat banks, and our work for nature's recovery.

Find out more:

bbowt.org.uk/planning-advice/biodiversity-net-gain

“We worked closely and carefully with BBOWT to deliver the first registered BNG habitat bank in Buckinghamshire at Ludgershall Meadows to ensure that it will achieve high integrity biodiversity outcomes over the coming 30 years and beyond to set the standard for others to follow.”

David Sutherland, Buckinghamshire Council



2 Biodiversity Net Gain habitat banks registered with Natural England



52ha of land being restored for nature

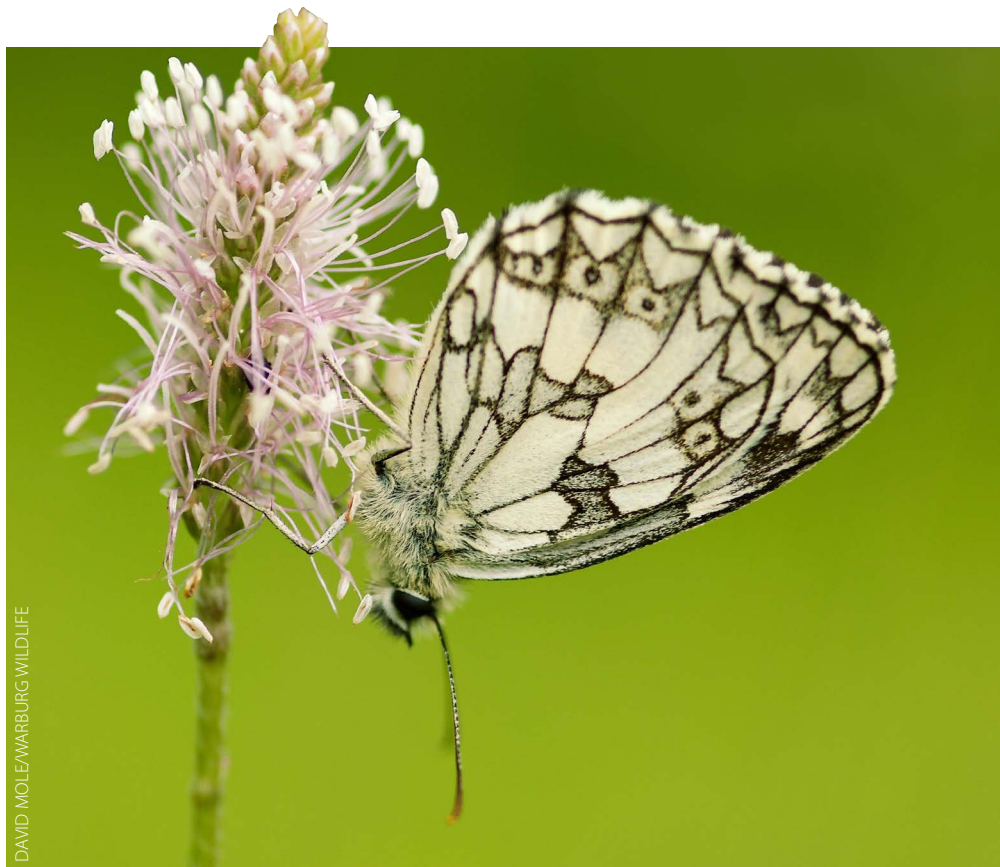


£325k of new income received

Our finances

Berkshire, Buckinghamshire & Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust continues to maintain a healthy financial position.

We have had success in maintaining our financial security in uncertain times through careful financial management. Our income was also boosted through generous gifts in wills, a successful year of trust and grant project funding, and increased engagement from business.

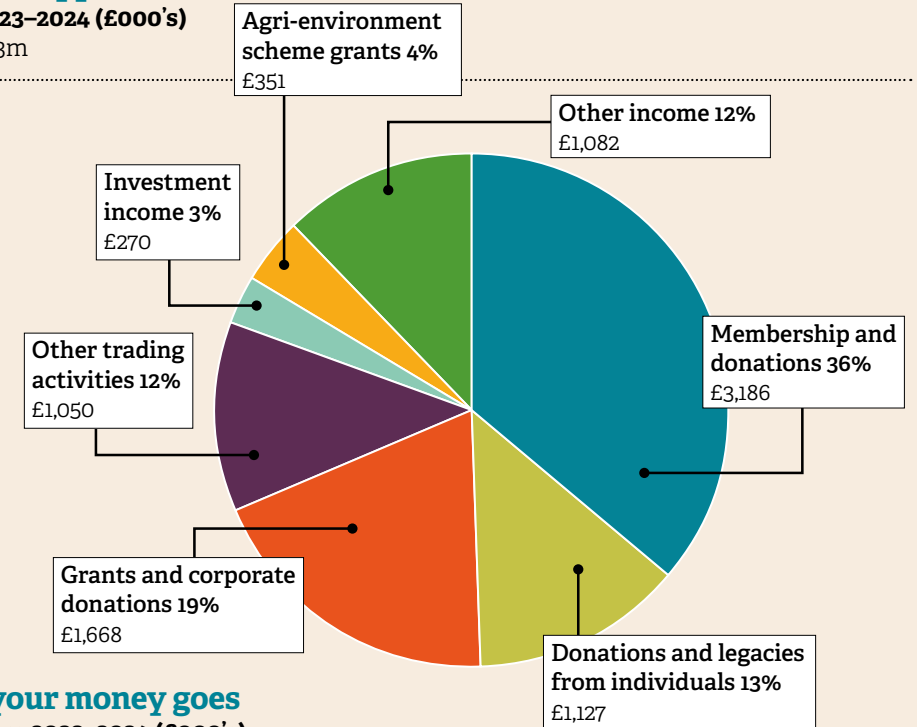


DAVID MOLEWARBURG WILDLIFE

How you support us

Income 2023-2024 (£000's)

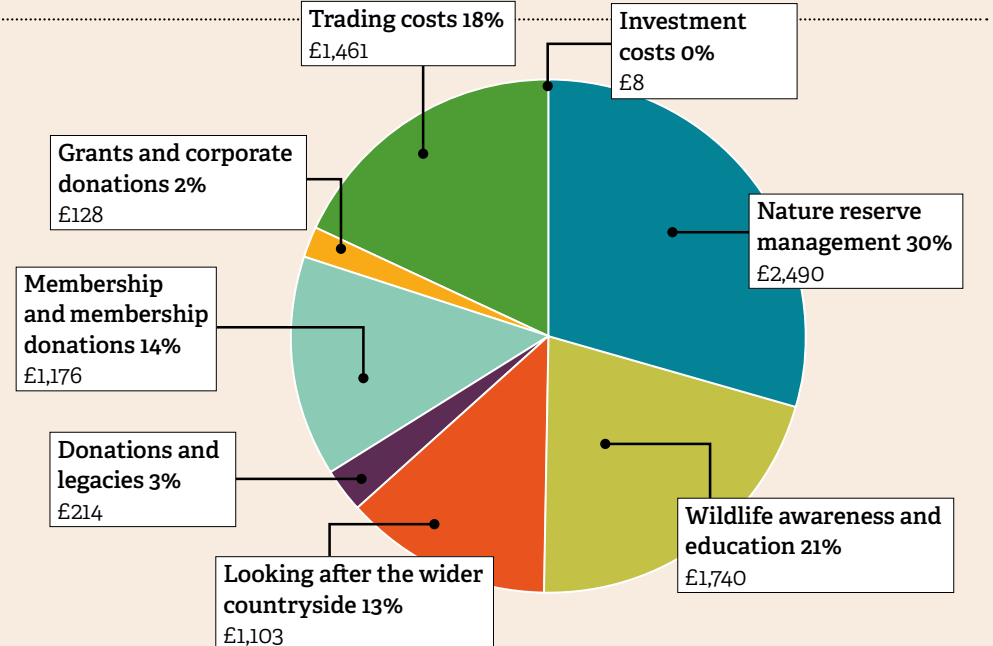
Total: £8.73m



Where your money goes

Expenditure 2023-2024 (£000's)

Total: £8.32m



Our members

Fundraising promise...

The Berkshire, Buckinghamshire & Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT) is committed to fundraising and communicating in an honest and transparent way.

We aim to ensure that everyone who chooses to support us, whether by joining as a member, making a donation, giving their time to volunteer with us or attending events, has a positive and rewarding experience and understands that their support is truly valued.

As part of this we will be honest and transparent, protect your data, be respectful of your wishes, and accountable. Berkshire, Buckinghamshire & Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust trustees regularly review all fundraising activity for both its cost effectiveness and compliance. Furthermore, trustees review all complaints received and any fundraising ones are reported to the Fundraising Regulator.



“Thank you to everyone for all you do for nature, the environment, the climate and people.”

BBOWT member, annual survey 2023



60,000
members



£3m+
income received
from memberships



4,253 new
memberships
during the year



10,889 Wildlife
Watch Club members



49% of our income
is from membership,
donations and legacies

LYNZI WORTH



Thank you to **our Supporters**

The Berkshire, Buckinghamshire & Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust relies on the generosity of its members and other supporters. Without this support we would not be able to achieve our aim of more nature everywhere, for everyone, in our three counties.

We would like to thank the following organisations and individuals who have generously supported BBOWT during the 2023–24 financial year. We would like to particularly acknowledge the continued support from individuals and organisations that enabled us to carry on with our work through the ongoing challenge of the cost-of-living crisis.

President

Steve Backshall

Honorary Vice-Presidents

Dr Pam Berry

Dr Robin Buxton

MBE DL CEnv FCIEEM

Professor Sir Dieter Helm

CBE

Martin Spray CBE

Audrey, Lady Wood

Board of Trustees

George Levvy (Chair)

Graeme Thompson (Honorary

Treasurer to 01.02.24)

Zoe Hancock (Honorary Treasurer from 01.02.24)

Frances Brindle (Deputy Chair)

Natalie Ganpatsingh

Gregory Webster

Drew Bennellick

Miles Evans

Mark Chacksfield

Tim Davies

Garth Clark

Jolyon Austin – appointed 27.07.23

Sam Burgh – appointed 07.03.24

Amy Padfield – appointed 07.03.24

“I was pleased to be able to make a further donation again this year to the fantastic work of BBOWT. I have enjoyed visiting many of the reserves and it is a joy to see wildlife flourishing through the stewardship of the charity.”

Martin Tillin, Sula Innovation

Charitable Trusts (£2,000+)

29th May 1961 Charity

Abri Communities Fund

Dorothy Holmes Charitable Trust

Du Plessis Family Foundation

Ecover Fertilise the Future

Heathrow Community Trust

Lennox Hannay Charitable Trust

Richard Radcliffe Charitable Trust

Thatcham Relief in Need Fund

The David Family Foundation

The D'Oyly Carte Charitable Trust

The Helen Roll Charity

The McLay Dementia Trust

The Michael Marks Charitable Trust

The Robert Pilgrim Photographic Trust

The Shanly Foundation

Statutory organisations

DEFRA

Environment Agency

Natural England

Rural Payments Agency

Grant making bodies

Action for River Kennet

Chilterns Conservation Board

Highways England

National Lottery Community Fund

National Lottery Heritage Fund

North Wessex AONB

RSWT

Thames Water

The Crown Estate

Landfill Communities Fund

Grundon

FCC Communities Foundation

Veolia Environmental Trust

District Councils

Buckinghamshire Council

Cherwell District Council

Oxfordshire County Council

South Oxfordshire District Council

Vale of White Horse District Council

West Berkshire Council

West Oxfordshire District Council

Bicester Town Council

Thatcham Town Council

Local Business Donors

CH&CO

Eleos Compliance

Purely Plants

RWE

Sula Innovation

Business Engagement Partners

A Menarini Diagnostics UK

Ascot Lloyd

Berkshire Botanical

Berkeley Homes

Blenheim Palace

Castle Hotel Windsor

Catesby Estates

Chroma

DHL Supply Chain

Freeths LLP

Greencore Homes

Ipsen Biopharm Ltd

Johnson Matthey Plc

Jordans Farms

Karl Storz Endoscopy (UK) Ltd

Nature Bureau

Oxford Pharmagenesis Ltd

Pacific Produce

Primark

QuickMoveNow

Radley College

Renegade Brewery

Sophos

St Anne's College

St John's College

Tieva INC (Prodec Networks)

University College Oxford

Vale Brewery

Vine House Farm

Major Donors

Rose Dale

John and Hilary Everett

Professor & Mrs Helm

Mr & Mrs Tony Hill

Tony & Marion Gillie

Mr Roger Jefcoate CBE DL

Mr Jonathan Loose

Dr and Mrs Gil McVean

Mr and Mrs Peck

Tony & Judith Yarrow

Legators

We are extremely grateful to the following people who left a bequest to Berkshire, Buckinghamshire & Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust in their Will:

Mrs Claire Blunden

Mrs Mary Clark

Dr Bridget Davies

Miss Margaret Drage

Mr John Dunn

Miss Janet Glanvill

Mr John Edward Harris

Mr Michael Jones

Mr Richard Mosses

Mr Michael Stabler

Mrs Leila Willoughby

We also thank those individuals and families who have chosen to donate anonymously.

Looking forward to 2024-25, our plans for the next year and beyond

As we move into the fourth year of our Wilder strategy, we will review and refresh our plans, monitoring our progress and any challenges, and begin looking ahead to our next Strategic Plan.

Put Nature into Recovery

We will continue to ensure our existing reserves are rich in wildlife and secure funding for delivery from both government grant schemes and independent grant providers. We will also focus on opportunities to expand our nature reserve holding through acquisitions funded by Biodiversity Net Gain. In addition to our existing habitat banks at Duxford Old River and Ludgershall Meadows we will establish a third habitat bank and scope out potential locations for a site in Berkshire. We will seek to identify an opportunity for a beaver reintroduction project.

Beyond our reserves, we will work to create bigger, wilder and more connected landscapes, with particular areas of focus being in the Bernwood Forest and Ray Valley Living Landscape and Upper Thames Living Landscape. We will continue to work with partners to deliver high quality conservation projects over 20,000ha in the wider countryside; and challenge housing and infrastructure that threatens nature's recovery.

Empower People to Act for Nature

In the wider community, we will continue to collaborate with community groups and co-design our Community Network to enable more people to do more for nature on their patch. We will work with partners and create opportunities for community collaboration to enable more people to take action for nature. Our project work will continue with the Engaging with Nature project in Windsor and Maidenhead, and the Nextdoor Nature

project in Reading and Slough.

We will continue to deliver our formal education offer to primary and secondary schools at our five education centres alongside developing our inspiring Lifelong Learning offer. We will plan and deliver our bursary programme with primary schools across our counties.

We will collaborate across teams to ensure that we promote excellent volunteering experiences and continue the roll out of our digital volunteering system.

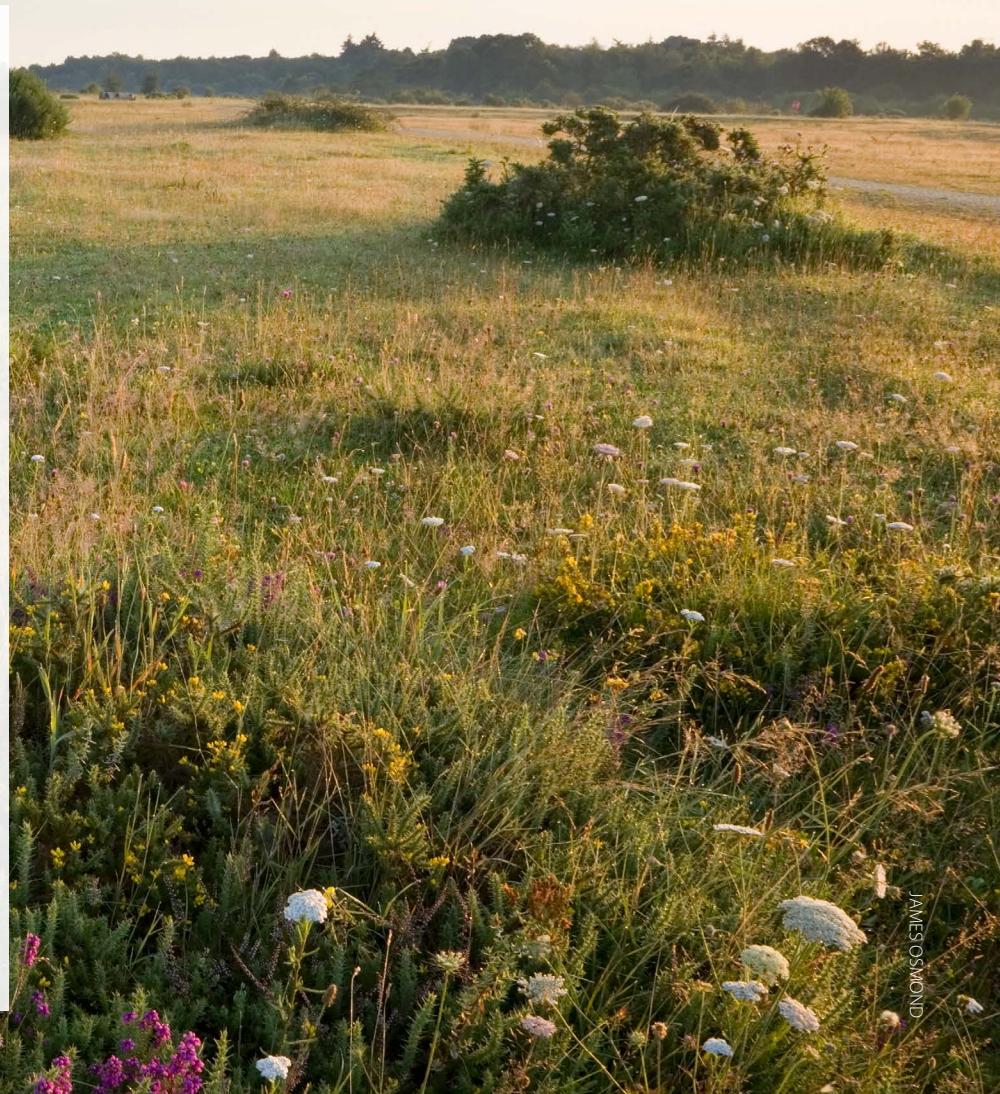
Secure our Future

We will continue our new approach to engagement with business, aiming for a new large-scale partnership during the year. For the second year of the Nature Recovery Fund, we will have ambitious fundraising totals from multiple income streams.

We will focus on attracting and retaining young people, develop our work experience and paid traineeships offering, and expand our diversity by developing and embedding our EEDI framework across the organisation.

We will continue our digital transformation journey, with contributions to shared collective Wildlife Trusts' data projects, a framework for using AI within BBOWT, and ongoing improvement to our IT infrastructure, cybersecurity and hosting arrangements.

[Read more about plans for more nature everywhere, for everyone, and how you can get involved in Wilder, available at bbowt.org.uk/publications](https://bbowt.org.uk/publications)



Be part of **nature's recovery**

Berkshire, Buckinghamshire & Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust brings people together to create more nature everywhere, for everyone.

Thanks to the generosity of individuals, charitable trusts and businesses, we are able to achieve our goals. Through their support, our experts work with hundreds of volunteers to look after more than 80 nature reserves, five education centres and two visitor centres. To find out more or to support our work visit bbowt.org.uk

Berkshire, Buckinghamshire & Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust is one of 46 Wildlife Trusts across the UK. Together, The Wildlife Trusts are a grassroots movement of people from a wide range of backgrounds and all walks of life, who believe that we need nature and nature needs us.



**Berkshire
Buckinghamshire
& Oxfordshire**
Wildlife Trust



Contact us

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Grants, trusts, individuals & major gifts

fundraising@bbowt.org.uk

Company support

partnerships@bbowt.org.uk

Legacies

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Volunteering

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