

Somerset
Wildlife Trust

ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS 2023/24



THANK YOU

It sometimes feels that those two simple words are just not enough. Two words to reflect our enormous gratitude to the huge number of members, supporters and funders who over 60 years have believed in and supported our work, and enabled us to stand up for nature when it has needed us most. Without you, we cannot do the work that we do.

Thank you to our dedicated and hard-working staff - whose passion and commitment for nature remains a driving force of all that we do, and also inspires so many people to join the Wildlife Trust family. Thank you to our amazing volunteers who give up so much of their time to support us. You are a vital extension of our staff teams, and without who we simply could not carry out vital work on our nature reserves, carry out species monitoring and deliver other engagement and fundraising work.

Thank you to our campaigners who stand up, speak out, and are counted, meaning that nature has a powerful voice on their side.

We are proud of all that we have achieved together for our wonderful county, and how our effort is amplified on a national scale by being part of the The Wildlife Trusts, 46 independent Wildlife Trusts working together under a national strategy. It's humbling to know that as a county, there are so many people that are so committed to working towards nature's recovery. And we know that you will inspire many more to come with you.

Thank you.

Somerset Wildlife Trust is a registered charity.

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CONTENTS

Part 1 View from the top	4
Introduction from our Chair	6
Message from our CEO	8
Part 2 Our strategy	10
Our approach	12
Wilder Somerset 2030	13
Organisational transformations	14
Our shared values	15
Part 3 Strategic report	16
How we raised and spent our money	18
Goal 1 More space for nature	20
Goal 2 A movement for nature	28
Goal 3 Telling Somerset's story	36
Our people and organisation	42
Developing Somerset Wildlife Trust	44
Volunteers	48
Fundraising	50
Financial review	54
Objectives and activities	57
Structure, governance and management	60
Statement of trustees' responsibilities	65
Part 4 Independent auditor's report	66
Part 5 Financial Statements	72
Consolidated statement of financial activities	74
Consolidated and trust balance sheets	75
Consolidated statement of cash flows	76
Notes forming part of the financial statements	78
Gifts and donations	94
Key people and advisors	95



PART 1:



View from the top

- ▶ Introduction from our Chair
- ▶ Message from our CEO



Our target is
30% of our land
and seas being
managed
positively for nature by 2030





INTRODUCTION FROM OUR CHAIR



**“We have blueprints for success
we must replicate on a wider scale”**

This is my first Annual Report since taking over as Chair, so I'd like first of all to say thank you to our previous Chair, Graeme Mitchell, for leaving the Trust in such good shape. As this is the Trust's 60th anniversary year, it seems appropriate to reflect on some of the changes the county has seen since those first fifteen people put in just £1 each to create the Somerset Trust for Nature Conservation, as it was then.

Since then, the county has seen increased urbanisation and development, massive changes in farming practices and of course we've been subject to the broader impacts of climate change. All of these things have had an impact on Somerset's wildlife; we've lost grassland habitats, seen

the water quality in our rivers deteriorate and experienced massive species decline over this period.

Set against this though are some grounds for hope; the recent changes in legislation, designed to help meet the national target for 30% of our land and seas being managed positively for nature by 2030, have meant that new opportunities such as Biodiversity Net Gain and Nutrient Neutrality offer the potential for significant funding becoming available for nature recovery and restoration.

And we've shown what's possible when we put our minds to it, as the first Somerset State of Nature Report completed this year demonstrates; wading birds such as great





white egret and bittern have increased as a result of recent projects, beavers have returned to the county, and we now have two ‘super’ National Nature Reserves in the Somerset Wetlands and on the Mendip Hills. They are blueprints for success we must replicate on a wider scale.

So what might the next 60 years look like? It’s clear that nature remains under great pressure on both a local and global scale. The impacts of increasing weather volatility and the continued demand for land for development such as housing and infrastructure continue to put huge pressure on our wildlife and natural environment.

But I take huge encouragement from things such as the move towards nature-friendly farming, which represents a critical opportunity for us to work with the farming community to find a way that we can both produce food and help nature recover. Positive too is the continuing collaboration with other environmental and conservation partners. We cannot act alone; delivering at scale, and with many different nature stakeholders is vital if we are to achieve the ambitious targets set for nature recovery.

We need to see science as our ally too, not just in terms of the potential for technological innovations to help with things like species revival, but also looking at how using science and evidence-based information is critical in terms of informing and underpinning the actions we need to take going forwards.

In terms of broader social changes, my sense is that the next generation will be increasingly environmentally conscious and active for nature. Broadening our audiences overall to achieve our goal of supporting 1 in 4 people in the county to connect with nature is vital, and we are committed to being as inclusive as possible and bringing on board every one that shares our values.

Which brings me to my final point, which is that our biggest asset is the fantastic support and commitment from our supporters, members and volunteers, who collectively give me confidence that we will continue to make a massive contribution to nature recovery over the next 60 years!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rupert Taylor'.

Rupert Taylor

MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO



“This has been a year of change as we adjust our focus and resources to achieve our Wilder Somerset 2030 targets”

In 1964, fifteen people showed their passion and commitment by creating a trust for nature, paying in £1 each. These amazing pioneers could see that nature was in decline and took visible action to turn that around. They're the original Team Wilder. Roll forwards sixty years and we've grown to being an organisation that has over 22,000 members, more than 350 volunteers supporting us in a range of different ways, and are approaching 100 staff, delivering a huge array of projects across the county - all focussed on achieving nature's recovery.

When I joined the Trust five years ago, we had just 37 staff. Thanks to having a clear strategic approach set out in our Wilder Somerset 2030 strategy, we have been able to expand our teams purposefully, ensuring that we are able to deliver more and have greater impact, as both the ecological and climate emergencies accelerate in pace. We are lucky to be supported by a skilled and experienced board of Trustees who, with excellent

counsel, have enabled careful growth for the purpose of achieving more for nature.

This has been a year of change at the Trust as we adjust our focus and resources to achieve the targets we have set in Wilder Somerset 2030. New ambition to create a movement for nature in Somerset through Team Wilder, develop our evidence base, and support other landowners to take action, along with new opportunities such as green finance initiatives offer significant potential to scale up our delivery to achieve more for nature, but require an investment in skills and capacity at the Trust.

To this end, we've invested in our leadership team, bringing on three Directors who will provide strategic leadership to achieve the three goals of our strategy, creating opportunities in each area and growing and supporting our teams. We've identified a need for investment in science, monitoring and data, so have created a new Innovation and Evidence team, at

the same time supporting Somerset Environmental Records Centre (SERC) to increase efficiency and capacity to analyse data to report on biodiversity trends and patterns across the county.

Expanding our partnerships is critical to successfully achieving our goals. Through the Local Nature Partnership and with Somerset Council we are leading the development of Somerset's Local Nature Recovery Strategy. With Somerset Environmental Records Centre and the Local Nature Partnership we have delivered the first ever Somerset State of Nature Report which will be used to monitor our progress to reversing nature's decline.

Crucially, to achieve the goal of 30% of land in management for nature by 2030, a goal for us, Somerset and the UK, we must work with land managers across the county. Our pioneering Landscape Recovery project team are working with 15 land managers to find collaborative ways of restoring

22,692 members of Somerset Wildlife Trust in 2024

350 volunteers supporting us in a range of different ways

87 staff, delivering a huge array of projects across the county



Somerset's lowland peat; our land advisory team provide support and advice to farmers, communities, estates and businesses across the county; and our nature reserves team have worked hard this year to create a second 'super' National Nature Reserve in the Mendip Hills – Somerset is the only one with two 'super' NNRs.

Our consultancy has been relaunched as Somerset Wildlife Trust Consultancy (SWTC) and will be focused on supporting delivery of our strategic goals including arboricultural, land management and land advice services. We are now providing high quality advice to land owners on Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), carbon credits and nutrient neutrality. Through SWTC we seek to set a high standard for environmental consultancy in Somerset.

Most importantly we need to inspire and support a movement for change across Somerset through Team Wilder, building on the work of our 15 early pioneers, to create a tipping point of 1 in 4 people

taking visible action, from farmers to communities to young people and businesses. We've secured funding to work with communities across Somerset and to develop a youth forum, growing our engagement team and focusing on becoming a more inclusive and diverse organisation creating a culture where everyone feels welcome.

You told us to be bold in our advocacy and speak with a strong voice for nature when we consulted to write Wilder Somerset 2030. We are the largest charity in Somerset focussed on nature and as one of 46 Wildlife Trusts we're part of a national movement with almost one million members. Through delivery of our national Wildlife Trusts strategy, Bringing Nature Back, we are working more closely than ever with The Wildlife Trusts to ensure that we put Somerset's voice behind national advocacy campaign work to bring about legislative change.

We have campaigned hard on a range of issues that are of local concern such as the ban on

horticultural peat, water quality, and the use of neonicotinoids, and have added volume to the national work surrounding issues related to the Environment Bill such as the REUL Bill. We are really proud of what has been achieved – and our supporters should be too, because so many took the time to write to their MPs, sign e-petitions and make some noise for nature when it needed it the most.

We've achieved an enormous amount for nature this year. I am immensely proud of the whole team - staff, volunteers, supporters and members - for all we've achieved. The challenge is great but I am still able to see seeds of hope – blueprints for a brighter future where, if we continue to collaborate, we can scale up to meet that challenge. I am excited about what we can achieve together.



Georgia Dent



PART 2:

Our strategy

- ▶ Our approach
- ▶ Wilder Somerset 2030
- ▶ Organisational transformations
- ▶ Our shared values



Currently only
10% of the county
can be classified
in good natural
or semi-natural condition

OUR APPROACH



OUR VISION

A Somerset-wide nature recovery network creating more space for wildlife, benefiting everyone and playing its part in helping us reverse biodiversity loss and tackle the climate crisis.

OUR MISSION

Working for the changes needed for nature and people to thrive together.

Created in 2020, and co-designed by trustees, staff, members and supporters, our Wilder Somerset 2030 strategy remains the lodestar for all that we do. This Annual Report sees us nearly at the halfway point of that strategy. Though the outlook for nature is bleak and the pressures on it remain and accelerate

in pace, over this time we have also seen some really positive progress, and learned a great deal about where best to focus our efforts. We know that if we work together with our supporters, partners and wider nature stakeholders in the county, we can bring nature back. **Nature can't wait.**

WILDER SOMERSET 2030

GOAL 3

TELLING SOMERSET'S STORY



▶ The story of nature's recovery in Somerset is told through our interactive State of Nature tool that monitors progress and informs action.

▶ We need a clear understanding of what is happening to wildlife over time in terms of biodiversity and abundance so we can make clear decisions for nature's recovery, based on scientific data and evidence.

▶ We will monitor trends, fill the gaps in our species knowledge, and increase the number of records held by teaming innovative and meaningful data recording methodologies, with a strong programme of public citizen science opportunities and training. Nature needs more eyes on the ground.

GOAL 1

MORE SPACE FOR NATURE



▶ Nature is improving everywhere with restored natural processes, connected and protected through a Nature Recovery Network, with at least 30% of land and sea managed positively for nature (30 by 30).

▶ Currently only 10% of the county can be classified in good natural or semi-natural condition with species-rich natural habitats supporting abundant and diverse wildlife.

▶ Tripling the land managed for nature is a challenge but we will buffer and connect our nature reserves to the wider landscape and work in partnership with our peers, partners, communities, farmers, landowners, and individuals to influence how land is managed across the county, ensuring it is with nature in mind.

GOAL 2

A MOVEMENT FOR NATURE



▶ Everyone has the opportunity to experience nature, with at least 1 in 4 people taking action for nature's recovery across Somerset as part of Team Wilder.

▶ Awareness of the environment is higher now than it has been for several generations, but our collective behaviours do not yet match our concern or the scale of the challenge.

▶ We will inspire more people to turn awareness into nature-positive behaviours and action - a critical mass that can tip the balance for nature's recovery. Value for nature comes from experiencing it, so connecting people to it and enabling them to share their experience with others is vital.

ORGANISATIONAL TRANSFORMATIONS

We have identified four key transformations that we believe will enable us to realise our strategic goals and achieve our strategy. These transformations form a continuous dynamic process that underpins our collective ability to achieve our vision of a thriving natural world.



1 We will invest in a skilled, inclusive, diverse workforce and learning culture

We invest in our people, staff and volunteers, ensuring we have the skills and experience needed to achieve our goals and create opportunities for people to develop their careers and achieve their goals. We are relevant to and inclusive of all communities, we listen and learn from them and understand their needs and aim to speak with an authentic, credible voice.



2 We will create a step change in the scale and diversity of funding for nature's recovery in Somerset

We will engage with more supporters who share our values and goals, from corporates to individuals, and diversify our income streams, including through innovation such as green finance, to ensure our core delivery model is funded through our unrestricted income. We will use project funding for time limited or innovative work. We will expand our commercial activities, identifying new opportunities and always setting high standards for environmental integrity and due diligence.



3 We will speak up for nature with a bold, authentic voice

We are bold and confident speaking out for nature, backed by our members and supporters, with a strong brand and clear communications approach. We are not afraid to say we are part of nature and what nature needs to thrive. We invest in science, monitoring and research to be evidence-led in our delivery, advocacy and policy. We hold ourselves and others to account through the Somerset State of Nature. We use our knowledge, expertise and evidence to inform decision making in Somerset that impacts on the environment. We hold ourselves to the highest standards of governance, transparency and accountability.



OUR SHARED VALUES

Somerset Wildlife Trust share the following fundamental values, which underpin all of our work and support our journey to a Wilder Somerset 2030.



4 We will show leadership across Somerset to support and influence change

Our direct contribution is only part of the solution to tackling the ecological and climate emergencies, to truly be effective we must support, influence and inspire others to take positive action and lead by example in our delivery including our own environmental impact. We manage existing and acquire new land to protect the precious and vulnerable species until the wider landscape improves and demonstrate how nature can recover sharing our learning with others. We test and trial innovative new approaches to land management including financing, to support other landowners. Our visitor strategy recognises the important role our land plans in connecting people with nature balanced with protecting vulnerable species and habitats. We invest in digital technologies to improve our efficiency, effectiveness and connect with people.

1 We believe everyone can make a contribution to nature's recovery

2 We love Somerset - it's amazing wildlife and its communities

3 We are confident and brave in order to achieve the greatest impacts for nature

4 We encourage innovative thinking and action for nature's recovery

5 We are passionate about nature



PART 3:

Strategic report

- ▶ How we raised and spent our money
- ▶ Goal 1: More space for nature
- ▶ Goal 2: A movement for nature
- ▶ Goal 3: Telling Somerset's story
- ▶ **Our people and organisation**
- ▶ Financial review
- ▶ Objectives and activities
- ▶ Structure, governance and management
- ▶ Statement of trustees' responsibilities

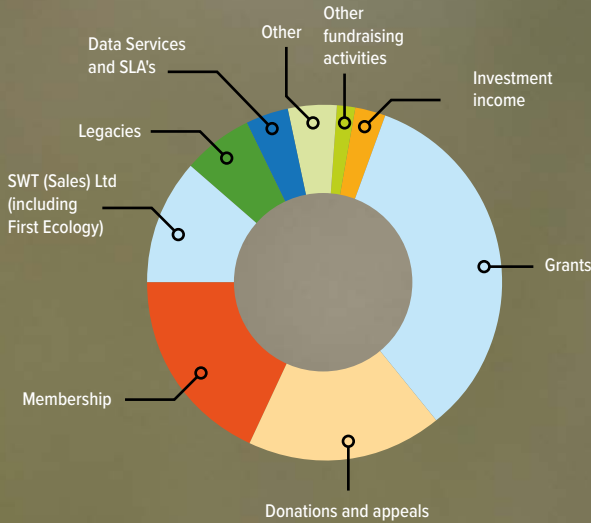


1 in 4 people to take action
for nature's recovery
as part of Team Wilder

HOW WE RAISED AND SPENT OUR MONEY

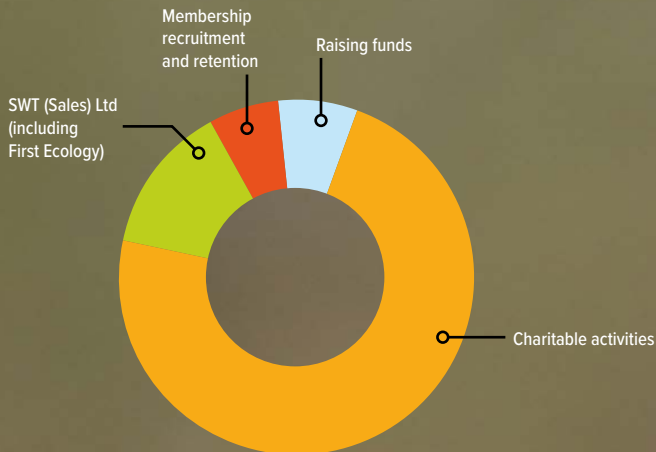


INCOME BY SOURCE



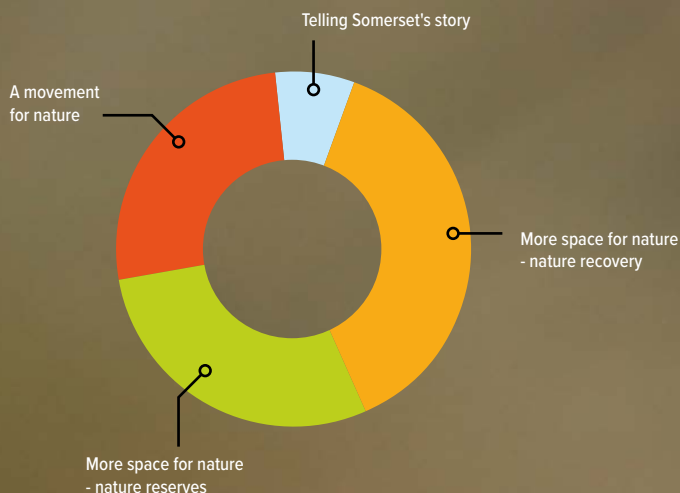
	2023/24 £'000	2022/23 £'000	Change %
Grants	1,652	2,528	-35%
Donations and appeals	875	901	-3%
Membership	890	856	4%
SWT (Sales) Ltd (including First Ecology)	553	529	5%
Legacies	310	270	15%
Other	214	79	171%
Data Services and SLA's	198	141	40%
Investment income	132	61	116%
Other fundraising activities	81	71	14%
Total income	4,905	5,436	-10%

EXPENDITURE BY ACTIVITY



	2023/24 £'000	2022/23 £'000	Change %
Charitable activities	3,421	3,445	-1%
SWT (Sales) Ltd (including First Ecology)	650	589	10%
Membership recruitment and retention	296	283	5%
Raising funds	334	294	14%
Total expenditure	4,701	4,611	2%

EXPENDITURE ON CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES



	2023/24 £'000	2022/23 £'000	Change %
More space for nature - nature recovery	1,297	1,628	-20%
More space for nature - nature reserves	993	803	24%
A movement for nature - Team Wilder	888	796	12%
Telling Somerset's story - Somerset Environmental Records Centre	243	219	11%
Total expenditure	3,421	3,446	-1%



GOAL 1

More space for nature

FACTS AND STATS

16 of the 18 species of bat resident in Britain call Somerset home, making it one of the best counties for these mammals.

Somerset contains **60%** of Great Britain's nationally scarce spider species

In Somerset we recorded:

37 breeding pairs of great white egrets
(2022/23)

27 marsh harrier, 11 nests and 26 chicks
(2023)

61% increase of bittern in 8 years
(2014-22)

169 bearded reedling in one day in 2019
from just 20 in Somerset 10 years ago

There are an estimated **50** beavers in the
Avon and Frome area

(Source: Somerset State of Nature Report 2023)



The challenge

The drivers of biodiversity loss in the UK are complex and often interlinked. Direct habitat loss and fragmentation related largely to development, agricultural activities and other land use change, teamed with overexploitation of resources, a surge in invasive species, pollution and climate change have led to drastic changes in the quality of our habitats and the ecosystems within that support species and deliver benefits to people and communities.

Our approach

The 30 by 30 goal is a national ambition, supported by the UK government and The Wildlife Trusts - a tool that guides how we collectively can put nature into recovery and connect green spaces. In Somerset only around 10% of the county can be classified as in good natural or semi-natural condition with species-rich natural habitats that support abundant and diverse wildlife, and enable species to move, reproduce and thrive. This figure includes all the county's nature reserves, Local Wildlife Sites and legally designated sites. Our approach remains constant; working with partners and other stakeholders to build a strong, interconnected network of wild spaces across the county. One that delivers good quality habitats that support abundant wildlife, and restores the resilience of our ecosystems at a landscape-scale, so they can provide us with healthy soils, clean air and water and help us to adapt to a changing climate.

What we aimed for

Our nature reserves are high quality, biodiverse places but need to be **better connected to the wider landscape** so species can move and expand. One of our key aims this year has been to explore how we can do this via either strategic **land acquisition or partnership** to extend these core areas, and at the same time demonstrate how to develop these various sites for wildlife using new innovative **land management practices**, and how this might be paid for through **green finance** and other new funding mechanisms being brought to the market such as nutrient neutrality. Vital too was the need to increase our work with a **greater number of landowners, farmers and communities** across the county, in focussed landscape areas, to understand how we could best **share our knowledge** and **support them** to operate in a way that means they can deliver for business, local economy and nature at the same time.

OUR IMPACT IN NUMBERS

In the last year we **35** purchased over **35** acres of new land which we will enhance and create habitats, to support existing and returning species and enable nature recovery.

Over **50** substantial land holdings have been given nature recovery advice by our land management specialists.

Our Mendip Hills Facilitation Fund has expanded substantially to an area now covering over **5,290** hectares with **36** members, **9** of which have joined in the last year.





WHAT WE DID:

DRIVING FORWARDS A LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGY FOR SOMERSET

This year, in partnership with the Local Nature Partnership (LNP), we have been providing advice and support to Somerset Council to deliver a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) for the county. Required by law, LNRS are a new, England-wide system of spatial strategies, funded by DEFRA, that help identify priority habitats for improvement, and those that offer the best opportunities to reverse the decline of nature across the wider environment. It has been a significant opportunity for Somerset Wildlife Trust to use its decades of experience to support the county to deliver real nature recovery, doing so in a collaborative way.

CONNECTING THE MENDIP HILLS

Along with eight other organisations, including Natural England, Avon Wildlife Trust, Mendip Hills National Landscape, the National Trust, the Woodland Trust and Butterfly Conservation, we were delighted this year to celebrate the declaration

of Somerset's second 'super' National Nature Reserve (NNR) in the Mendip Hills - the only county with two, following the declaration of the Somerset Wetlands NNR the previous year.

Encompassing 1,413 hectares of land, the new 'super' NNR brings together Ebbor Gorge and Rodney Stoke nature reserves with 29 other nature-rich reserves, many of which are Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), and an additional 400 hectares of land within the Mendip Hills Natural Landscape area, and stretches from woodlands in Wells, across the southern Mendip slopes and Brean Down in the Severn Estuary. The partnership will be at the heart of nature recovery in the Mendip Hills and will see land managers work together to conserve and help restore steep limestone slopes, traditional wildflower grasslands, ancient wooded combs, spectacular gorges and rocky outcrops to maximise the benefits for nature, science, and people, improving nature recovery on a landscape-scale and creating more opportunities for people to

connect with the natural world. We are incredibly excited to have achieved this across what is another iconic Somerset landscape and demonstrates the power of local partnership in terms of delivering against national 2030 targets.

FIRST STEPS TO RETURN LOST SPECIES TO SOMERSET

This year we have been laying the foundations upon which we can support the return of selected species that we feel can make our landscape more biodiverse, either through their ability to manage water and natural processes, bring back balance to nature through predation, control vegetation, provide food, or just add to our enjoyment of the countryside by being inspiring and beautiful.

We were so pleased to be able to create a new role within the Trust – a Human and Wildlife Coexistence Officer. Alicia has wasted no time in working with communities to increase understanding about how they can co-exist with existing species and those returning to the county.



It's really important we listen to communities and any concerns, and establish systems through which people can benefit from the many advantages these species bring for nature and communities, including flood and drought mitigation, climate adaptation, and restoring resilient ecosystems, while simultaneously minimising challenges that might arise.

Through partnership consultation, we are in the process of developing a beaver strategy for Somerset. This strategy when complete will be delivered by Beaver Advisory Groups and will support, advise and enable communities and landowners to live next to this species, maximising benefits for nature and society but also providing much support for potential issues that might arise. We became a significant supporting partner for the Two Moors Pine Marten Project, led by our friends at Devon Wildlife Trust which aims to bring this, our only arboreal mammal, back to Exmoor.

We have also have been in discussion with projects conducting feasibility studies for white-tailed

CHRIS EYLES,
Senior Reserves Manager, West Mendip

In one sentence describe your job: I plan and implement a wide range of practical land management work on the Mendip nature reserves, delivering high biodiversity habitats in the landscape.

What energises you in your job?: Observing the long term effects of the habitat management we carry out on our nature reserves – for example, seeing a bank of species-rich grassland buzzing with life, and thinking “we did that” – is simply the best job satisfaction I could wish for.

What makes you proud to be at Somerset Wildlife Trust?: We have an amazing team of people working at the Trust with an incredible depth and range of conservation knowledge, and a shared goal of doing everything we can to protect our natural heritage. I'm very proud to be a part of that team.





eagle reintroductions to Wales and wildcat reintroductions to Devon to make sure Somerset is included in social engagement work prior to any licence applications being made.

WORKING WITH AND SUPPORTING SOMERSET'S FARMING COMMUNITIES

With around 74% of land in Somerset in agricultural production, we recognise how important farmers are both to our county and to deliver our ambitions for nature. With increasing climate change issues, Britain's exit from the European Union, changes to farming subsidies and the Agriculture Act, farming is changing rapidly. This year we have continued to work with some amazing farmers who have been evolving their land management practices to work in harmony with nature at the same time as running a successful business. We have learned a great deal from them about how we go about creating sustainable farming systems that deliver the changes we need to recover the health of our natural environment and how, by working more closely with them, we can create more sustainable farming systems that deliver environmental gain, maximise natural management solutions and secure a long-term economic future for farming within the county. Our Mendip Facilitation

Fund project brought together 36 farmers providing valuable training opportunities on subjects such as soil health, hedgerow management, dormouse habitat, silvopasture and no-fence collar demonstrations. Alongside Somerset Council the project also sourced funding to plant over 5,000 trees as of the Treescape Fund. This year has also seen the creation of a really forward-thinking farm cluster of 36 farmers in this landscape too who, with their collective experience and skills have explored new ideas and approaches to sustainable land management that will deliver benefits across their landholdings.

We have also focussed more support for farmers on the Somerset Levels & Moors through our Defra funded Adapting the Levels ELMS Landscape Recovery Project. This is a two year pilot working with 15 landowners, with a focus again on supporting them to adapt their operations to recover nature and protect the quality of our soils, notably peat in the lowlands, whilst still growing healthy food. These conversations are so vital for finding common ground and a platform to discuss new area such as regenerative farming and the benefits of developing Environmental Land Management schemes (ELMS), such as the one the

Trust operates in this landscape. As landowners ourselves, our reserve staff go to great lengths to engage positively with farming neighbours. We retain many as graziers to deliver conservation grazing with their animals, demonstrating that food can be produced on our land whilst prioritising nature.

SAVING SOMERSET'S PRECIOUS PEATLANDS

Healthy, functioning peatlands are superhero habitats when it comes to combatting climate change and supporting rare, specialist species. Somerset alone, is currently estimated to be storing almost 11 million tonnes of carbon, equivalent to the carbon sequestered if 182 million trees were grown for 10 years. Unfortunately, across the UK approximately 80% of our precious peatland is actively eroding. When peat dries out the carbon it holds, and has held for millenia, is released into the atmosphere so we must keep peat wet and in the ground. It might take 1,000 years for 1 metre of peat to form, however under heavy drainage that same 1 metre could be lost in only 33 years.

Somerset is one of only two counties left where peat extraction is still taking place, so this year has seen us double down on our work to protect and restore it at all

costs through a range of projects, partnerships and activities.

We have been highly active this year in terms of mobilising our supporter base and wider public, alongside the wider Wildlife Trust movement in terms of supporting a campaign to bring about promised legislation to ban the use of horticultural peat as a first step to a total ban. We have continued our work at Honeygar to remove the site from the drainage network so we can hold the water table higher and keep the peat wet. We have put in new dams and small, solar powered pumps and collected hydrological data and evidence from our interventions there to inform our wider peat work and share our learnings with other landowners. We host the Somerset Peatland Partnership through the Local Nature Partnership and this too has enabled us to add to the science of peat restoration by carrying out greenhouse gas monitoring on a range of sites, at the same time, engaging positively with farmers and landowners to make informed decisions about how to navigate the changing political and environmental landscape and explore their own potential peat restoration projects at the same time as delivering viable farming businesses.

Alongside buffering the site by acquiring a new piece of land at Westhay South, we have also continued our work to fast track the enhanced resilience of our Westhay NNR reserve, completing a second year of trialling an innovative new peat restoration technique to raise water levels on the site and safeguard the peat resource, protect precious populations of wetland species and protect rare and fragile mire habitats. You can read more about that in the Spotlight overleaf.



SIAN RUSSELL

Peatland Partnership Project Coordinator

In one sentence describe your job:

I coordinate the Somerset Peatland Partnership and project manage peatland restoration work at Westhay Moor.

What energises you in your job?: Knowing that the project is helping to keep carbon in the peat locked away rather than being released and contributing to climate change, also getting to see sundews on a

regular basis!

What makes you proud to be at Somerset Wildlife Trust?: The Trust is making a real stand for wildlife and the adaptation for climate change in the county, from youth engagement work, community climate events and farm cluster work there is so much positive work and energy going in from some very talented people and volunteers.

ALICIA HALLETT

Human-Wildlife Co-existence Officer

In one sentence describe your job: My role is to find ways to support human communities around wildlife that already exists or may be returning to the county to live alongside each other, capitalising on any benefits our co-existence can bring and mitigating any challenges we might pose to each other.

What energises you in your job?: The people I work with and meet whose passion and determination to address the combined biodiversity and

climate crises is infectious! And the ability to give nature a voice as an equal stakeholder. I'm energised by feeling like I can simultaneously support people and nature.

What makes you proud to be at Somerset Wildlife Trust?: Working for a company whose values align with my own, that is trying to make a positive difference, and, crucially, that is empowering people from all walks of life to enjoy and nurture nature in whatever way is possible for them.



SPOTLIGHT

Cell bunding work at Westhay

Along with a range of rich wetland habitats, flora and fauna, Westhay is home to the largest surviving fragment of lowland acid mire in South-West England. For years our reserves team and volunteers have battled the scrub and bracken which encroaches onto the rare wetland habitats and further dries out its precious peat. With continued unpredictable changes in weather patterns and events, it was becoming clear that more drastic, adaptive action was needed to prevent the water from draining from the site leading to the peat drying out and releasing its carbon stores. It was vital that we improved the hydrology in site to increase the resilience of this very special place for the longer term and preserve the precious peat and the carbon contained within - and ensure that the rare and specialist plant, invertebrate and animal communities associated with peatlands have a home long into the future.

We turned to an innovative new technique called cell bunding, used regularly to restore upland peat but not previously used on lowland peat. Following a period of removing vegetation from the site and a number of preliminary hydrology interventions, this year has seen our team repairing fissures and cracks in the peat that exist below the surface by using existing healthy peat from the site to create deep trench 'bunds'. This technique turns over and compresses degraded peat creating a water resistant barrier around each unit that reduces movement of water horizontally through the peat layers and enables the water table to be held for longer within each unit. This will provide natural flood management during wet periods and drought relief in dry periods.

As a result of this work the site will be able to support more specialist peat bog species including sphagnum mosses and the amazing carnivorous sundew.

WHAT WE ARE GOING TO DO IN 2024/25:

MORE LAND TO SUPPORT AMAZING WILDLIFE

Our reserves currently provide some of the finest examples of nature-rich places in the country. We will be working to further improve our network through targeted efforts to make them safer and more accessible for people and, through specific work, enrich habitats for species like large blue butterfly, bittern and water vole. We will work hard to ensure they remain excellent quality habitats and, where designated, are in “favourable condition”, demonstrating to the county what good habitat management looks like.

We are making targeted efforts to expand the reserve network to include land that might be restored to eventually become nature-rich, through acquisition or partnership. We do this again to innovate our approaches and demonstrate good land management practices to others how this might be done and work with researchers to improve techniques and better understand the benefits of this work to society.

WORKING WITH OTHERS DELIVERING NATURE RECOVERY AT A GREATER SCALE

As a member of the Local Nature Partnership (LNP) we have worked hard with the council to develop a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). This coming year, this strategy will be embedded in the county planning policy framework and provide clear and stretching ambitions for nature recovery and we are committed to doing all we can to ensure its success and impact.

We will be working with a range of different land owners offering advice and support to recover nature, initially focussing on our priority landscapes and supporting the thousands of Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) in the county. Our intention is to work with farmers, businesses and the public sector to increase ambitions within their business to help us deliver.

UNDERSTANDING AND DEVELOPING FINANCING FOR NATURE

We will better understand and even trial a range of finance regimes delivering nature recovery, both from government and from the private sector. We will also be directly engaged with the whole range of new government subsidy regimes for nature, biodiversity net gain with developers, nutrient neutrality and carbon markets to better understand how we can fund nature’s recovery.





GOAL 2

A movement for nature

FACTS AND STATS

86% people said that protecting the environment is important to them.

However less than a third of people said they often or always did any one of the listed social actions for the environment which included voting for political parties with strong environmental policies, signing petitions or participating in campaigns or demonstrations about environmental issues.

(Source: The People and Nature Survey for England 2020-21)

84% of children and young people surveyed agreed that looking after the environment was important to them

87% children and young people said that they would like to do more to look after the environment

(Source: The Children's People and Nature Survey for England 2023 Update)



The challenge

David Attenborough once said, 'No one will protect what they don't care about; and no one will care about what they have never experienced'. Awareness of the environment is higher now than it has been for several generations, but our collective behaviours do not yet match our concern or the scale of the challenge. We are helping people be more aware of the issues and then act on their knowledge. Team Wilder is a movement for nature. It's a network of communities taking action in their local area, it's young people gathering for a youth forum to have their say on nature, it's farmers choosing to manage their land with wildlife in mind and so much more. Through it, we offer a range of inspiring action-orientated initiatives which empower people to take part, and bring their skills, experiences and time to act for nature in a way that works for them.

Our approach

Evidence shows us that if 25% of the population take action and we are visible doing it, we create a social tipping point - a magic moment when an idea or social behaviour crosses a threshold and where the majority will follow. Team Wilder uses this principle as it's underlying motivation, and pulls in the science, knowledge and practical application of behaviour change, community organising, movement building and nature connection to build a team of people taking action for nature across the county that they love.

What we aimed for

This year we looked to **expand our Team Wilder work** across the county and reach new and more diverse audiences.

Funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, we launched the **Wilder Communities 30x30** project which equipped us with a new **Youth Officer** to kickstart our **youth engagement programme** and an additional **Community officer** enabling us to extend our reach into the south and east of the county. Our **Somerset Nature Connections** project came to an end this year, but our learning enabled us to take forward an ambition to develop a new wellbeing offer. Supporting and educating a wider audience about the key issues in light of political uncertainty, saw the birth of "**Wilder Matters**" - a series of online events getting to the heart of the biggest environmental topics of the day and their relevance to Somerset, breaking down the jargon and supporting people to take action for nature.

OUR IMPACT IN NUMBERS

50+ new people trained in using iNaturalist (as part of community projects to record citizen science data)

NEARLY 150 people from communities across Somerset joined our first Wilder Community forum in Oct 2023.

NEARLY 400 people attended 5 Wilder Matters events, discussing peat, water quality, the Somerset State of Nature, our political system and species reintroductions.

OVER 100 experiential events and training workshops including wellbeing walks, species identification, and wilder churches.





WHAT WE DID:

SOMERSET NATURE CONNECTIONS

With its last year this year, this very special three and a half year project has demonstrated how facilitated weekly nature connection courses can have enormous benefits to mental health and wellbeing and people's ability to manage it ongoing, with many participants even describing their experience as "life-changing" or "life-saving". Involvement in the six week courses this year have led to independent communities taking their own action to support nature's recovery, including; setting up community gardens, a forest school and nature connection courses/ support groups. Furthermore, 38 community groups (such as care settings, services supporting children/young people, mental health projects, art and walking and services supporting displaced communities) were also supported to bring the benefits of nature connection into their work as a result of training and nature connection sessions throughout the project.

CAMPAIGNING AND ADVOCACY

The Wildlife Trusts has a long history of campaigning for nature – speaking out against laws or developments that would put habitats or species at risk. Collectively the 46 individual Wildlife Trusts have over 1 million members - that's a serious voice. Our strategy said that we would use a bolder, more confident voice in Somerset, and this year, we have been much more proactive both in terms of supporting national campaigns on key issues, including those related to the Environment Bill and then preparing for a General Election. We have also delivered bespoke projects around the key issues that are closest to our hearts in Somerset, namely the banning of peat extraction, water quality of our rivers, nutrient overload on the Somerset Levels & Moors, the use of neonicotinoids and the removal of the Acoustic Fish Deterrent (AFD) at the developing Hinkley C site on our coast. We have been humbled by the hundreds of people that have taken the time

to sign an e-petition, write to their MP or spread the word within their communities.

We have been active on many other less visible issues too, responding to other selective developments and planning applications where we believe nature and wildlife is at risk. Our resources are limited which is why engaging with, educating and then mobilising our supporter base is so vital. To that end we created a new series of online public events - Wilder Matters - delivering five events discussing peat, water quality, the Somerset state of Nature, our political system and species reintroductions, with nearly 400 people in attendance.

27 communities have requested a Wilder Churches and Burial Grounds plaque to display in their community



RELAUNCH OF PCNR

Somerset's Private & Community Nature Reserves (PCNR) Network was set up in the 1990s to support people who own or manage land primarily for nature. After a pause due the pandemic, this year, we prepared plans to bring the network back to life and relaunch it. This user-led network, hosted and supported by the Trust, provides peer-to-peer support and resources for landowners, smallholders and community groups (such as local woodland trusts and community orchards). Through the network, landowners and land managers are able to collaborate and share ideas on how their land can act as a vital stepping stone for wildlife across the landscape and deliver benefits for nature, people, and climate. Collectively, we manage land throughout Somerset that supports meadows, hedgerows, orchards, and woodlands, ponds, streams and lakes, many of which are designated as Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) - a classification that provides a means of identifying

KRISTEN LAMBERT

Wilder Lives Manager

In one sentence describe your job: Supporting individuals and communities to access nature and wildlife connection opportunities in Somerset.

What energises you in your job?: The passionate and dedicated people I get to work with, both Trust colleagues (staff and volunteers) and those within the communities I work with.

What makes you proud to be at Somerset Wildlife Trust?: I'm proud to work as part of the engagement team at the Trust because people within the team are not only passionate about the future of nature and wildlife in Somerset and actively supporting it's recovery, but also that it's essential for us to do better, to ensure those previously underrepresented within this sector are supported to access and take action for nature in ways that are meaningful to them and their communities.





and safeguarding some of the county's best sites for wildlife. Recording of these sites by SERC started in 2008/9 and we have lost 48 sites - the current number is 2099 equating to 7.03% of Somerset, so it's vital that we are able to protect and connect these sites to the wider landscape.

CITIZEN SCIENCE

It's really important that we monitor and understand changes in both the diversity (the variety) of species we have and, more importantly, the abundance (the quantity) of wildlife species we have across the county. This year, we have continued to deliver our very popular annual programme of public citizen science species counts – the Great Somerset Wildlife Count - which uses the popular iNaturalist recording platform. We also now have Wilder Community Champions going into communities to train community leads in iNaturalist to lead data collection, helping to expand the numbers of Community Mapping projects delivered across the county.

Another huge success this year has been the continued unwavering commitment by our Shore Search and Sea Watch projects. We have run over two dozen citizen science events with up to ten people attending each. Porpoises continued to be spotted at various locations, especially at Hurlstone Point, and Shore Search surveys have recorded over 100 taxa of marine species. Volunteers also led on three coastal research projects on porpoise photo ID, the distribution, size and age of toothed topshell (climate indicator species) and pacific oyster distribution (invasive species).

WILDER COMMUNITIES

Our Wilder Community Officers support local people to take action for nature on their patch - assisting with group establishment, community consultation and nature recovery projects. Thanks to National Heritage Lottery Funding, we have been able to successfully deliver a range of brilliant community projects including; setting up a new Yeovil Green Forum, creating two giant bug hotel installations and wildflower area in Lyngford Park with Priorswood community and supporting landscaping with a tree planting project in Glastonbury.

We ran
37 Shore Search
and Sea Watch
citizen science
events along
Somerset's coastline

MARK WARD

Somerset's Wilder Coast
Project Manager

In one sentence describe your job: My focus is to support local communities, businesses, young people and individuals in raising awareness of our coastal ecosystems and the need to protect and monitor them.

What energises you in your job?: Being out in nature and inspiring people about the coast and the sea.

What makes you proud to be at Somerset Wildlife Trust?: Being part of an enthusiastic and dedicated team spreading the Team Wilder message.



SPOTLIGHT

Youth programme launches to create young hearts with green minds

Recent studies have shown that most young people lose their connection to nature after the age of ten, and once lost, it can take twenty years to recover. We believe it's vital that young people are able to value, explore, and strengthen their connection to nature, in ways that are relevant and inspiring to them - for nature's sake and for their own health and wellbeing.

Thanks to the recruitment of a Wilder Youth Officer, this year we have been able to progress our plans for our youth programme, kicking off with the launch of our new Wilder Youth Forum which brings together 20 active passionate young people between the ages of 12 – 24. With the long-term goal of embedding youth voice into the charity, the forum meets bi-monthly

in different locations around the county to input on a range of projects, as well as equipping them with the skills and experience they need to speak up about the environmental issues they care about.

We have been able to support these young people to build initial connections with nature, provide guidance and training such as species ID, participate in youth-specific volunteering days and offer work experience opportunities on our reserves and across other teams. Through these activities and more, we are committed to involving youth voice in the Wildlife Trusts movement and supporting the many young people across Somerset already taking a leading role in nature recovery.

BRYONY SLAYMAKER

Wilder Communities Manager

In one sentence describe your job: Along with a brilliant team of community officers it's my job to support communities and individuals to take meaningful action for nature in their local area and every day lives.

What energises you in your job?: Witnessing people

across all generations taking action for nature and influencing their friends and family to do the same.

What makes you proud to be at Somerset Wildlife Trust?: We're local, we love Somerset and the incredible wildlife in our county.



HANNAH PADDISON

Volunteering and Community Support Officer

In one sentence describe your job: As Volunteer and Community Support Officer I coordinate and support staff to deliver our volunteering opportunities as well as work on a number of projects including the PCNR Network and Wilder Churches.

What energises you in your job?: Spending time with the volunteers, communities and individuals who

are taking action for nature across Somerset. Learning from others and seeing people's passion for conservation never fails to amaze me.

What makes you proud to be at Somerset Wildlife Trust?: The people! I am proud of the staff, volunteers and communities I work with who all share the same goal to protect and preserve our wildlife and wild places.

WHAT WE ARE GOING TO DO IN 2024/25:

DELIVERING A NEW ENGAGEMENT DELIVERY PLAN

The work we've done to build Team Wilder this year has given us opportunities to test and learn and refine our approach. In 2024/25 we'll be looking to build on our successes to ensure we can continue to empower people to take meaningful action for nature, seeking sustainable sources of funding, and using the Team Wilder ethos across all engagement work we do at the Trust.

DEVELOPING OUR VOLUNTEERING STRATEGY

We are currently developing a Volunteer Strategy to cover 2025 – 2030. It will set out how we envision volunteers supporting us to achieve our strategy goals, and how we see our volunteer opportunities evolving.

INCREASING OUR EXPERIENCE TOUR DELIVERY

The popular, income-generating 'private' guided walks led by our Visitor Experience Officer will be expanded to include more reserves, and also offered pro bono to under-represented groups around the county.

HELPING PINE MARTEN BOUNCE BACK

This year will see us take a key role in the Pine Martens Bounce Back: Two Moors Pine Marten Project, working across Dartmoor and Exmoor. We'll be hosting the Pine Martens Engagement Officer (Exmoor) who will inspire and support diverse audiences to become Pine Marten Pioneers, growing their conservation skills, capacity and leadership confidence in the process.

WELLBEING NETWORK

Over the next three years, a Wellbeing Officer will be supporting groups/professionals to embed nature connection for wellbeing, supporting healthier, happier communities who care and take action for nature and wildlife in Somerset.

MEASURING OUR IMPACT

The next year will be a crucial time for measuring impact, as we have now embedded the Team Wilder approach across our work and developed a baseline. Our impact measurement will focus on measuring behaviour change in individuals and across the communities we work with, as well as collecting stories to bring the numbers to life.



SPOTLIGHT

Community collaboration for nature in action

This year, we had an amazing opportunity to work with a local community in Priorswood, near Taunton to create a beautiful space for nature in Lyngford Park. The last 12 months has seen them pitch in to create a beautiful habitat for wildlife. As part of this project, renowned artists Alice Cunningham and Jon England constructed triangular frames from pallets donated from Hestercombe Gardens which were then packed with nature materials by local families. Children from Brook Green Nursery

where the structures have been installed also planted an area with wildflower seed and made signs to let people know about the project. This small project of improving a public space for nature has seen a huge number of people contribute and is a brilliant example of Team Wilder in action, bringing together local families, Brook Green Nursery, Priorswood Community Centre, local artists, the Somerset County Council Parks and Open Spaces team and Somerset Art Works.



GOAL 3

Telling Somerset's story

FACTS AND STATS

Habitats in Somerset have seen dramatic decreases in species richness since 1990, with terrestrial insects deteriorating most significantly.

5.14% loss of Somerset's total grassland habitats, with some areas significantly higher at 11.5%.

60% Decline in fritillary distribution from 1990 to 2021, with overall butterfly distribution in decline over last 30 years.

21 'Good' quality rivers in Somerset in 2019, down from 38 in 2009.

260% increase in non-native invasive species cover between 1990-2021, with 37 species recorded.



The challenge

It is only through the collection of scientific data that we can pull together a strong evidence base that will enable us to show trends, patterns and distribution of habitats and species, that in turn can help inform where best to focus our efforts to restore nature in Somerset. The Somerset Environmental Records Centre (SERC) has collated over 2.4 million records covering 150 years, large majority of the species do not have enough regular recording data for population trend analysis.

Our approach

Nature needs more eyes on the ground so in order to fill the gaps in our species knowledge, and increase the number of records held, our approach has been to combine innovative and meaningful data recording methodologies, with a strong programme of public citizen science opportunities and training, fuelled by our Team Wilder programme of work, to increase the number of individuals and communities capturing data for us.

What we aimed for

Our key aims this year were to explore and embed **new innovative monitoring technology** to support our overall **monitoring efforts**, and in addition to species, using **modern equipment and tools**, establish **new metrics** that will enable us to **track changes** in biodiversity net gain, carbon storage and water quality, habitat creation and land use change. Important too was to **scale up our citizen science programme** and ensure that our strong relationships with **local authorities** continued, with Somerset Wildlife Trust being involved at an earlier, more strategic level in terms of delivering a meaningful nature recovery strategy for the whole county.

OUR IMPACT IN NUMBERS

Coastal citizen science groups:
37 Shoresearch and Sea Watch events, monitoring coastal species.

451 people have now signed up as observers to our Great Somerset Wildlife Count project on iNaturalist, taking part in 5 regular species monitoring projects across the year, clocking up a whopping 2,150 species observations.

1,465 PEOPLE have now downloaded our Big Count citizen science pack, a total of 178 people have joined this project on iNaturalist, and a total of 1,183 observations were recorded in the 2023 count.





WHAT WE DID:

FIRST SOMERSET STATE OF NATURE REPORT LAUNCHES

This year saw us launch the first ever Somerset State of Nature Report, in partnership with SERC and the Local Nature Partnership (LNP). The first of its kind for Somerset, and leading on from the national State of Nature Report released in 2023, the Somerset State of Nature Report 2023, is a comprehensive overview of the county's landscapes, providing an important benchmark of how nature and wildlife is faring across the county in context of national declines and, where data allows, shows trends in the abundance and distribution of species and quality of habitats, identifying the key pressures that wildlife is facing. This will enable us to target our limited resources on where we can have most impact and where collaboration with other partners can amplify that success.

The report makes for sobering reading. It's clear that Somerset's ecosystems have been impacted by climate change, changes in land management, development

and pollution; and invasive species and diseases are further threatening habitats. But the report also features seeds of hope: positive case studies which demonstrate that where there has been focussed effort on a landscape-scale, underpinned by a truly meaningful and committed partnership approach to nature restoration, the results can be simply outstanding, such as the success that has been experienced in the Avalon Marshes in terms of restoring the peat voids left by extraction.

SCALING UP OUR SCIENCE, EVIDENCE AND RESEARCH CAPABILITIES

The decisions we make about what priorities to set for our nature recovery programme must be based on good science and evidence. Over decades, we have accrued a great deal of species and habitat data and evidence, but this year, in order to improve and modernise this element of our work and put more structure in place for monitoring our impact

going forwards, we created a new Innovation and Evidence team.

The Trust is both exploring new opportunities in the nature recovery space such as BNG and carbon, and testing innovative land management approaches such as those at Honeygar, and it's important that we share our learning with our peers and provide evidence to support the decisions we have taken.

An important component of this ambition will be to increase our engagement with the academic research community. Developing more partnership in research will support us as a science and evidence-led organisation. Building on our work with the University of the West of England, this year we have already started new projects with Bristol University and have begun conversations with a wider range of leading academics on the work we are doing around peatland research. Working closely with the Somerset Environmental Records Centre staff we will be reviewing the first Somerset State of Nature report and looking to understand



ELLEN PHILPOTT
SERC Support Officer

how to direct our academic partnership work to fill evidence gaps in line with our strategy. It will also be important to be responsive to ideas from external partners, recognising the need for innovation and technological development to facilitate the process of data collection and analysis.

MARCHING ON WITH MONITORING AT HONEYGAR

We are on a journey with Honeygar to transform this former dairy farm into a haven for wildlife, to increase biodiversity and abundance on the site, restore natural processes and precious lowland peat. To create a site that will serve as an exemplar for nature-based solutions, where we can trial and explore best practice for new approaches to land management and funding mechanisms, and where we can demonstrate and share our ideas with others to inspire and stimulate change.

Central to our ability to deliver this is the ongoing implementation of a rigorous and annual monitoring programme. With the help of

partners and a strong technical team, this year we scaled up our survey and monitoring efforts on the site significantly and have been able to gather large volumes of information to inform our work moving forwards.

Over the past 12 months, we have completed major interventions on site to reduce water being drained and pumped away from Honeygar. We have also established a mixed grazing and cutting regime to get a variety of sward lengths to improve biodiversity.

Thanks to our staff team, university partners, our Honeygar Rangers group (new this year), 38 dip wells and a whole range of other innovative measurement equipment, Honeygar is now fully mapped and surveyed, hydrological regimes identified and baseline data collected for different species on site, soil types, carbon and greenhouse gases, water quality and the physical condition of land and buildings.

In one sentence describe your job: To assist the team in general data input, processing and analysis.

What energises you in your job?: To be able to contribute towards the important evidence required to inform others of the state of Somerset's habitats and species.

What makes you proud to be at Somerset Wildlife Trust?: The trust does so much work towards ensuring a sustainable, biodiverse and protected environment, that it gives me hope for the future as a young adult.



CASE STUDY

Wired for sound - bio acoustic bird monitoring

We've been working with innovative technology company, Wilder Sensing, since 2022 to help monitor and track changes in bird species on Honeygar as our interventions on site progress and as natural processes and habitats transform over time. At Honeygar, we have four audio sensors deployed on site in a variety of different habitats that are recording audio data 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and 365 days a year. These sensors are set to record bird song in the audible range on a continuous basis.

The audio data is collected each week and uploaded and processed utilising Wilder Sensing's innovative Artificial Intelligence analysis, and when set to a 90% confidence interval, have collected a staggering 1.3 million records from just four sensors. Notable bird species recorded at Honeygar include cuckoo, spotted flycatcher, snipe, cetti's warbler, lapwing and kingfishers.

As a result of the success of the Wilder Sensing Project so far, a further four audio sensors will be deployed at Honeygar, in addition to three bat sensors and a further 10 audio sensors deployed across our nature reserves in the Avalon Marshes, enabling us to be able to continuously monitor on a landscape-scale, producing huge datasets that will have immense value in demonstrating nature's recovery in the county and draw insights as to how bird species are responding to climate change. With this expansion we will be truly looking at monitoring nature recovery on a continuous basis at scale that has not been previously seen within the county.



JOE HAMPSON

Honeygar Wilding Officer

In one sentence describe your job: I lead the transformation and ecological restoration of Honeygar, engaging with stakeholders to promote nature recovery and climate resilience through innovative land management and peat restoration strategies.

What energises you in your job?: Collaborating with passionate colleagues,

engaging with the community, and witnessing the tangible impact of our conservation efforts at Honeygar.

What makes you proud to be at Somerset Wildlife Trust?: That we lead by example in restoring nature, tackling climate change, and engaging communities, creating a sustainable future for Somerset's diverse wildlife and landscapes.

WHAT WE ARE GOING TO DO IN 2024/25:

IMPROVE AND DEVELOP AN UPDATED SOMERSET STATE OF NATURE REPORT

To properly monitor Somerset's performance in terms of nature recovery, the previously published Somerset State of Nature Report needs further development in readiness for its next publication and for it to be accessible by a range of other stakeholders. This will focus primarily on the ultimate nature recovery indicator, which remains the extent and abundance of our Somerset wildlife species.

MORE EVIDENCE MADE MORE AVAILABLE

In order to better monitor our progress and iterate the Somerset State of Nature Report going forwards, we need more and better data from a variety of sources. We want to make the gathering and delivery of habitat and species data easier, so everyone from individuals, communities, schools, specialist groups and others can do it simply and contribute to creating a picture of our overall performance for nature's recovery. We will increase our citizen science programme in the coming year and, through our Team Wilder approach engage with more communities to recruit champions in this area.

MORE RESEARCH TO UNDERSTAND HOW WE CAN BEST RECOVER NATURE

With resources strained, we recognise that to ensure the best possible outcomes for nature we need to work in partnership with a range of experts in a range of technical fields. We will work in partnership with a broad range of researchers and experts to learn more about nature and launch our academic research programme as part of that work. This will generate support, increase data collection and drive innovation in research into the new areas emerging, for example, peat, BNG and carbon. We will do more work to develop our ambition at developing a national centre of excellence for lowland peat research at our Honeygar site.



SOPHIE LAURIE

Head of Innovation and Evidence

In one sentence describe your job: I lead a team of specialists including in the Somerset Environmental Records Centre, who focus on making sure everything we do in the Somerset Wildlife Trust is based on sound information and evidence.

What energises you in your job?: Looking for innovative opportunities to grow our evidence base and show the value

of working in partnership with Somerset Wildlife Trust, bringing in new and exciting public and private sector projects to deliver our ambitions for nature recovery.

What makes you proud to be at Somerset Wildlife Trust?:

Being part of an organisation of passionate people wanting to really make an impact on halting and reversing the decline in biodiversity in Somerset and the wider UK.

Our people and organisation

- ▶ Developing Somerset Wildlife Trust
- ▶ Volunteers
- ▶ Fundraising

Volunteers contributed

200 hours

to undertake
50 dormouse
monitoring surveys.





DEVELOPING SOMERSET WILDLIFE TRUST

The Trust has grown significantly over the past five years. We are now an organisation of nearly 100 people working across a number of sites in the county.

We have office-based teams working in a hybrid way, engagement and community staff that are mobile, and reserve-based staff and volunteers who are on the ground right across the county. We are proud of the way our teams work together, collaborate and support each other to achieve our vision. With this growth we recognised that we needed to invest further in the organisational infrastructure and support services for our staff and ensure we could continue to support the Wilder Somerset 2030 strategy effectively.

This year we progressed our digital transformation strategy to support knowledge sharing, improve data access, streamline decision-making and foster greater collaboration between all of our teams. In addition, we looked to further progress our inclusivity plans, invest in the development of our staff and volunteers, enable a more mobile and distributed staff base and progress our plans to become an employer of choice.

Exploring new commercial opportunities and creating new revenue streams is key if we are to continue to fund nature recovery in the long term. This year we have looked to expand our commercial offering through our consultancy business Somerset Wildlife Trust Consultancy (SWTC), land management, carbon credit and BNG credits.

Highlights from our work in 2023/24

Digital transformation: We are focussed on our outcomes and impact for nature, and our aim is to engage with people across the whole county. Facilitating really effective hybrid working gives us this flexibility, so to support this we need the IT infrastructure to make this work. This year we

HELUN JONES

Head of People, Culture and Resources

In one sentence describe your job: My team and I look after all the back-office operations, except finance, that keep the organisation running. Some of our role includes Facilities, HR, I.T., Health and Safety, Purchasing and Office Administration.

What energises you in your job? The knowledge that I have a great team who are willing to go the extra mile to achieve results to support the

organisations aim of restoring habitats to enable nature to thrive and encouraging healthy landscapes.

What makes you proud to be at Somerset Wildlife Trust? I am always amazed at the wonderful projects taking place such as the Somerset Tree strategy through the LNP and the Seven Estuary recovery work with its associated partners that my colleagues are involved

in making a difference to our landscape. My colleagues' passion to make Somerset an area where landscape and its waterways are habitats for wildlife to thrive in is outstanding and provides groundbreaking work to take action against the climate and ecological emergency that we face. I am proud to be part of such an ambitious Trust that makes a difference to our region, its inhabitants and its wildlife.



VICTORIA BROWN

Business, People and Culture Administrator

In one sentence describe your job: I provide administration support to the People, Culture and Resources team. This also includes Governance so I organise and attend various Council and Committee meetings and support our team of 12 Trustees.

What energises you in your job? I really enjoy helping people which is quite often what administration is – providing support to enable others to do their job effectively. And I find everyone’s passion for what they do really inspiring.

What makes you proud to be at Somerset Wildlife Trust? Knowing that we are making a difference for Somerset and the future generations that will live here.

have rolled out SharePoint across the organisation enabling visibility and access to key staff policies and processes, data and activities, no matter where our staff are, which will save huge amounts of administration time. Key to the success of this has been a programme of content migration, process digitisation and strengthening the security of our data through the further roll out of our CRM software. Our digital strategy this year has also focussed on creating ‘digital reserves’ - virtual tours of some of our most popular sites on the Avalon Marshes for those who may not be able to visit – for which we have been nationally recognised.

EDI and Safeguarding Supporting equality, diversity, and inclusion is deeply important to the Trust. It is vital that staff, visitors and volunteers have an inclusive and safe experience and that they are protected from harm, abuse or neglect. We champion equality and fairness and we are committed to being an inclusive employer. We have established EDI and Safeguarding working groups, policies and plans, trained staff and Trustee representatives in both EDI and Safeguarding, and have a programme of information provision including a calendar of EDI events.

Our Safeguarding plan is based on the pillars of safer recruitment, induction and training of staff, policies and procedures, record keeping and risk assessment, and CQI – commitment to learning. We have implemented a robust reporting system and distributed key information contact cards to all our public facing staff and updated our induction and ongoing training to continually support development in this area.

Commercial Activities Our wholly owned subsidiary, First Ecology and its accredited team of specialists and consultants have been providing professional, high integrity ecological services to a diverse client



base in Somerset and beyond since 2010. Whilst it has operated as a separate entity, First Ecology's purpose has always been strategically aligned with the charity's goal of nature conservation and all of its profits are channelled back to the charity.

Towards the end of the year, we rebranded First Ecology to Somerset Wildlife Trust Consultancy (SWTC), with the aims of maximising opportunities to deliver integrated land advice and land management to a broader range of landowners and capitalise on the opportunities offered in new markets such as BNG, ensuring our consultancy team are more aligned with the broader organisational aims. This has included the recruitment of a specialist arboriculturist to realise growth opportunities in this space and creation of a specialist land advice team.

Our Honeygar site continues to thrive under our care. We have developed our thoughts for our Honeygar site and have recruited a project lead to deliver the next phase which focusses on the buildings and how we develop them to reflect

our overall vision for the site. Throughout our work at Honeygar we are exploring new green finance opportunities such as BNG and carbon credits to test and learn from the processes in order to generate long-term income to manage land for nature and share this learning with other landowners, successes and failures.

Facilities and Environmental Strategy Our aspiration is to provide fit for purpose healthy, productive, collaborative and inspiring workspaces for our increasingly mobile and distributed workforce. Based on feedback from our Staff Survey, we have created an action plan to improve our facilities and improvements have been made to office layouts, heating, water systems, and electrical safety.

Whether it is building facilities, utilities and energy, transport or our own landholdings, it is critical that we consider the carbon impact in our decisions, and inspire others to take action by leading by example. It is our ambition to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030 and, following our environmental audit we have begun implementing our plans to reduce our carbon footprint. To reduce travel impact, we have further embedded hybrid working, a new electric vehicle (EV) has been purchased, and a charging point installed, and we are looking into a Cycle to work and Electric Vehicle purchasing scheme.

People: Our people are what make our organisation successful. It's important that we create a working culture that invests in, supports and nurtures people so we attract and retain staff and volunteers that



PHILIP WRIGHT

Facilities and Environmental Impact Manager

In one sentence describe your job: Ensuring that our facilities and working environment is both safe and comfortable for Staff, Volunteers and Visitors alike. Monitoring and adapting our Carbon footprint to reach Carbon Neutrality by 2030.

What energises you in your job? Visiting our different locations

around the county and gaining new knowledge from our incredible staff.

What makes you proud to be at Somerset Wildlife Trust? Its fabulous to be able to assist in the background of this fabulous organisation, and it always feels good to tell people where I work.



EMMA GOULD
HR Specialist

In one sentence describe your job: As HR Specialist I am responsible for ensuring personnel best practice is captured across the Trust with an employee centred focus.

More succinctly: It is a privilege to work with the whole of the Trusts dedicated team whose roles are varied and interesting to ensure the promotion of ecological and environmental benefits for the county and wildlife.

What makes you proud to be at Somerset Wildlife Trust? When I witness the passion our employees have towards their jobs and in particular hearing what an amazing difference the Trust makes educating communities about the importance of nature and the reintroduction of species.

in turn ensures we are a stable, successful and resilient charity. We want to create a culture that celebrates success, innovation and creativity as well as embracing diversity and inclusion, and enables us to authentically 'live' our organisation values.

We have recruited specialist HR resource, and as a result have been able to revamp our recruitment process, update our policies and role descriptions to reflect best practice. We have received really positive feedback on our inclusive approach to recruitment. We've delivered training in safer recruitment, that encompasses safeguarding, stakeholder welfare and inclusivity, as well as ensuring we develop and recruit to achieve a defined level of digital literacy.

To further support the growth of the organisation we have also restructured our teams to create three new directorates that strengthen our ability to deliver, our strategic goals. We are now a Disability Confident Employer, and will be working on getting to the next level on this pathway in the coming year.

OUR PLANS FOR 2024/25

Skills, Training and development

Further cement our commitment to our staff by rolling out a new development and support process to identify skills and training needs with a focus on continual improvement and future needs.

Long term facilities plan

Develop a long-term plan to deliver fit for purpose and aspirational office spaces which supports our commitment to Carbon net zero.

Commercial

Further explore the potential around BNG and looking to test and further develop our land advice and land management services for the benefit of nature through SWTC.

Digital transformation

Continue to roll out our transformation programme including automated reporting of key data, replacing legacy systems to streamline our processes and information flow and further broaden our digital reserves work.

Diversity and inclusion

To achieve our goals for nature's recovery we need everyone to be involved. We will continue to embed our newly launched our new EDI strategy across all parts of the organisation and will be proactively seeking to improve everything from our recruitment to our policies and our governance to make sure everyone can access all of our activities, work and volunteering opportunities and join our events.





VOLUNTEERS

Our commitment to our volunteers

Volunteers are at the heart of what we do. Volunteers founded the Somerset Wildlife Trust in 1964 and today remain fundamental to our work. They come from all walks of life, with a range of skills and experience, and we rely on their support to help create a Somerset rich in wildlife for everyone. They carry out a variety of roles, from practical habitat management and field surveys, to support for office activities and events, to running the Trust as members of Council, operating across the whole county from our brilliant coast all the

way across our key landscapes and projects. Our aim is to make volunteering at Somerset Wildlife Trust a welcoming and rewarding experience, supporting volunteers with training and recognition and our volunteering policy aims to reflect the high esteem in which the Trust holds every single one of them.

In 2023, 368 volunteers contributed 12,533 hours in support of our work. We were able to celebrate and recognise their achievements at our Annual Volunteer Awards which took place at our AGM. This year we

have enhanced the way we deliver communications to our volunteers to ensure they feel valued and connected to our work.

Our plans for 24/25

This year we are planning to develop a Volunteer Strategy for 2025 – 2030. This will provide a strong foundation for involving and supporting volunteers to deliver our Wilder 2030 Strategy, and will set out our commitment to recruiting, retaining, and supporting volunteers and how we see our volunteering opportunities evolving into the future.

“It’s been a life changing experience. I’ve learned so much about wildlife in Somerset and the importance of nature recovery. Meeting other like-minded people has been wonderful too.”

“I find volunteering very rewarding, and I get great support from the Somerset Wildlife Trust staff. It’s a chance to do something completely different to my day job and learn new skills.”

“Feel I’m doing “my bit” to give something back to Somerset - such a beautiful county. Plus the physical work also helps my health and fitness - physically and mentally.”



FUNDRAISING

Fundraising continues to be a vital source of income for Somerset Wildlife Trust, helping the continued delivery of our 2030 strategy.

In 2023/24, despite continued global turbulence and a national cost of living crisis, 68% of our income came from fundraising activities. Our supporters helped us raise over £3.4 million in income, spread across a diverse range of fundraising channels. This income has helped us continue our essential work across Somerset, protecting wildlife and wild places.

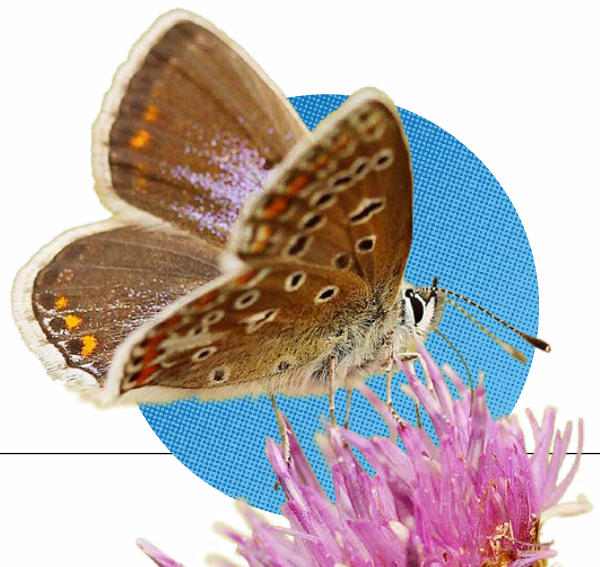


A note from our Head of Fundraising, Rebecca Walford:

The past year has presented significant challenges for fundraising efforts. The lingering impacts of the global COVID-19 pandemic, coupled with the current cost of living crisis in the UK, have created a particularly tough environment. Despite these hurdles, our dedicated team and loyal supporters have shown incredible resilience and innovation, ensuring that we continue to secure the necessary funds to advance our mission. Their unwavering commitment has been instrumental in helping us navigate these trying times.

As the cost of living crisis persists, many individuals continue to face financial difficulties, with household budgets being stretched to their limits. In Somerset, the need for environmental support is increasingly urgent. Our State of Nature report, published in November 2023, underscores the critical threats posed by biodiversity loss and the climate crisis. These challenges highlight the essential role of our efforts and the ongoing need for robust community support.

Amid the current challenges, the passion and dedication of our supporters stand out as a source of hope. Their unwavering commitment to preserving Somerset's wildlife and wild spaces has been truly inspiring and alongside this, we have witnessed an increase in the number of supporters, fueled by a growing awareness of environmental issues. We are lucky to have a skilled and determined team of fundraisers who have been instrumental in navigating these trying times with creativity and perseverance, and their hard work and passion ensure that we continue to secure the essential resources needed to continue our critical work.





Membership

Membership continues to be the largest source of unrestricted income for the Trust, bringing in 18% of our income this year. Our membership numbers have increased to 22,692 individuals, both within Somerset and from further afield. This steady growth, with membership income increasing by around 4% annually, provides essential core funding for our daily operations. We deeply appreciate our members, whose ongoing support enables us to protect and preserve Somerset's wildlife and wild spaces.

Trusts and grants

Trusts and grants are pivotal in funding our wide-ranging initiatives, from small trusts providing £1,000 to substantial grants from national bodies. In the past year we secured income from 36 successful applications, supporting a diverse portfolio of projects across the organisation. This included extensive work across the Somerset Levels, including a purchase of land adjoining Westhay Moor NNR and additional funding for our flagship initiative at Honeygar. Other funding helping us to grow our Team Wilder engagement delivery. Our strategic approach building strong relationships with grant providers and local Somerset Trusts remains instrumental in securing funding for impactful projects and our ongoing core work. We are grateful to the ongoing commitment from the Trust and Grant giving bodies who support us and their confidence in our work

ZOË FOWLER

Supporter Care Co-ordinator

In one sentence describe your job:

As Supporter Care Co-ordinator I take care of membership administration, keep the database up to date, add new members each week, and ensure memberships are renewed and cancelled. I also process donations, send out communications such as welcome letters / emails, renewal reminders and goodbye letters / emails, and also fulfil shop orders. I also liaise with SWWFL, help with admin within the Fundraising Team and make the staff newsletter.

More succinctly: Admin, admin and more admin!

What makes you proud to be at

Somerset Wildlife Trust? The work that we do for wildlife, and the passionate, creative and hard-working people we have to make this happen.

Community fundraising

Community fundraising has been the area most impacted by the challenges posed by the cost of living crisis. However, despite this, our enthusiastic supporters have engaged in diverse activities such as running, walking, caving, and opening their gardens, showcasing innovative approaches to fundraising. Beyond financial support, these efforts significantly contribute to our Team Wilder initiative, encouraging people to take action for Somerset's wildlife. This collective effort not only raises essential core funds but also strengthens community bonds and encourages environmental stewardship. Through these grassroots activities, we not only mitigate financial pressures but also foster a sense of shared responsibility towards protecting and preserving our natural heritage for future generations.



Major gifts

Philanthropic gifts are integral in supporting both our core operations and our ambitious new projects and land acquisitions. Their contributions have been crucial to advancing our ongoing initiatives, particularly at Honeygar through the Pioneer scheme. This support includes our dedicated group of 56 Patrons, whose regular giving forms a reliable foundation for our fundraising efforts. The continued generosity of this committed group of generous donors not only ensures the stability of our programs but also helps us further key areas of our strategy.

Becoming patrons has brought us closer to the Trust, enabling us to learn much more about their activities and the complex decisions that they often have to make. The events that they run for the patrons provide not only great opportunities to learn more about the natural world and its conservation, but they have also allowed us to spend time with the staff, including our CEO, giving us a greater feeling of connectedness and a chance to feed in our views.

Neil and Sarah Williams Joint Patrons

MICHAEL WOODMAN Philanthropy Manager

In one sentence describe your job: Connecting donors with the work of my colleagues to enable them to ensure their support is having as significant an impact as impossible.

What energises you in your job? The passion and expertise of our wonderful supporters and my brilliant colleagues. The range of

beautiful landscapes in Somerset is something very special as well.

What makes you proud to be at Somerset Wildlife Trust? I'm proud of the vital impact the Trust has had across the county since its founding and to be part of such a dedicated and knowledgeable team working to protect nature and connect people with it too.



Legacies

In 2023/24, legacies contributed £310,000, funds which are vital for bolstering our cash reserves, which in turn help fund strategic projects and can be used to support our work during challenging periods. Unfortunately, delays from HMRC have prolonged the process of receiving bequests from wills, in some cases up to four years from the original gift notification.

We are grateful to the 145 individuals who have generously pledged to include the Somerset Wildlife Trust in their wills, a commitment we deeply appreciate. These legacies are not just financial support; they demonstrate a true commitment to our work, ensuring our ability to thrive and endure through uncertain times. Each gift demonstrates trust in our work and secures our ability to continue making a difference.

Having been members of the Somerset Wildlife Trust for very many years and witnessed the brilliant conservation work they do, we feel the least we can do is to remember the Trust in our Wills. We hope that our gift will help the Trust continue their excellent work in safeguarding Somerset's wildlife for future generations to enjoy.

Mike and Angela Merrifield, Life members and legacy pledgers

LUCY MARSH

Legacy Manager

In one sentence describe your job: As Legacy Manager I am solely responsible for ensuring Somerset Wildlife Trust receives, maximises and protects all legacies bequeathed to the organisation.

What energises you in your job? My role as Legacy Manager is very varied and I wear numerous hats, including being a lawyer, administrator, counsellor, fundraiser, estate agent, auctioneer, property developer, negotiator, arbitrator, forecaster and stockbroker to name just a few.

What makes you proud to be at Somerset Wildlife Trust? Legacy income is vital for the survival of Somerset Wildlife Trust, and I am very proud to work and live in Somerset and be part of a team that helps protect and preserve our wildlife and wild places for future generations to experience and enjoy.





FINANCIAL REVIEW

An overall surplus of £222,000 (£732,000: 2022/23) was recognised, with total group funds increasing to £10.7 million (£10.5 million: 2022/23), as we continue to grow and invest in the delivery of our Wilder Somerset 2030 strategy.

A total of £4.9 million (£5.4 million: 2022/23) income was recognised in the year, 70% of which, was from grants, membership, donations and appeals. Overall expenditure grew slightly to £4.7 million (£4.6 million: 2022/23).

A surplus of £400,000 (£239,000: 2022/23) was achieved on unrestricted funds after transfers which was primarily due to income raised in the year for the purchase of tangible and heritage assets (land). This included £323,000 for the acquisition of 35 acres of land at Westhay.

There was a £178,000 reduction (£306,000 surplus: 2022/23) in restricted funds representing planned expenditure of funds for specific purposes as agreed with the funders.

Overall group funds increased by £222,000 from £10.5 million to £10.7 million, £6.2 million of which, is represented by tangible and heritage (land) fixed assets including £4.8 million for land holdings.

We continue to recognise the importance of financial resilience, particularly in the current challenging economic climate. During the year the financial reserves policy was reviewed and updated

to ensure that financial reserves holdings remain adequate given recent growth. Investment in the development of new commercial activities is ongoing to ensure diversification and future income growth to support financial stability.

Income

Income for the year totalled £4.9 million (£5.4 million: 2022/23), mainly from grant funding and the continued generosity of members and supporters.

Grant income for the year totalled £1.7 million (£2.5 million: 2022/23) representing the largest source of income in the year and 35% of overall income. This included £292,000 from the Nature for Climate Peatland Grant Scheme and £168,000 from DEFRA for the ELMS Landscape Recovery project. The reduction compared to 2022/23 is due to the completion of two significant projects in 2022/23. A total of £452,000 (£437,000: 2022/23) grants were received through agri-environment schemes, which specifically support

the management of our nature reserves and represent 27% of total grant income.

Membership income continues to be a vital source of unrestricted income for the Trust and grew to £890,000 (£856,000: 2022/23), the second largest source of income in the year and representing 18% of total income. The number of members also grew to 22,692 (22,265: 2022/23).

Income from donations and appeals totalled £875,000 (£901,000: 2022/23) representing the third largest source of income. This included £335,000 towards both the acquisition and initial restoration of the land at Westhay and £177,000 raised for Honeygar.

A total of £310,000 (£270,000: 2022/23) legacy income was recognised in the year from 27 bequests.

Income from other trading activities totalled £634,000 (£600,000: 2022/23). This includes a 5% increase in income achieved by the Trust's wholly owned subsidiary, SWT (Sales) Ltd, which totalled £553,000 (£530,000: 2022/23).

Investment income increased to £132,000 (£61,000: 2022/23) due to an increase in interest rates.

Expenditure

Overall expenditure grew slightly to £4.7 million (£4.6 million: 2022/23).

The majority of our expenditure continues to be represented by staff costs as we rely on our staff to enable the delivery of our goals. Staff costs totalled £2.7 million (£2.6 million: 2022/23) representing 58% of total expenditure. Overall our average staff numbers increased from 84 to 87 as a result of planned growth.

Nature recovery expenditure totalled £1.3 million (£1.6 million: 2022/23), a reduction compared to the previous year due to the completion of significant grant funded projects in 2022/23.

Our land, including our nature reserves, is critical to developing a strong Nature Recovery Network across Somerset and £993,000 (£803,000: 2022/23) was used for management and improvement. The Ash Dieback emergency works were completed in the year, supported by the Green Recovery Challenge Fund Ash Dieback project, and whilst there will be on-going costs associated with managing the disease it is not anticipated to be at such an exceptional level.

Expenditure on building a movement for nature, Team Wilder, increased by 12% to £888,000 (£796,000: 2022/23). This included delivery of grant funded projects including the Wilder Coast project and Somerset Nature Connections partnership nature and wellbeing project which was completed in the year.

SWT (Sales) Ltd (including First Ecology)

As a result of continued planned investment in our wholly-owned subsidiary SWT (Sales) Ltd, expenditure increased by 10% to £650,000 (£589,000: 2022/23) representing 14% of overall expenditure.

Raising funds

Overall expenditure increased by 18% and totalled £630,000 (£577,000: 2022/23) primarily as a result of new fundraising initiatives trialled in the year to support future unrestricted income growth.

Support costs

Support costs increased to £764,000 (£718,000: 2022/23), a small increase of 7% as a result of cost of living increases and overall organisational growth but still representing a similar proportion of overall expenditure at 16% (15%: 2022/23).

Financial reserves

Policy

The Trust has a policy of holding reserves of funds to:

- Enable it to take advantage of unanticipated opportunities to further the aims of the Trust when no other source of income is available.
- Provide adequate working capital to carry out projects for which funds have been granted by external bodies, but for which those funds are payable only after expenditure has been incurred.
- Provide a reserve to cover contractual obligations and short-term payment of essential costs, such as staff salaries, in the event of an unanticipated shortfall in funds and/or fluctuations in income.
- Meet any legal obligation on the Trust to meet any future costs.

Holdings

Total reserves at the end of the year increased to £10.7 million (£10.5 million: 2022/23) although a significant proportion of this total is represented by tangible and heritage (land) fixed assets, restricted funds and designated funds leaving free financial reserves of £1.76 million (£871,000: 2022/23).

Total reserves	£10,736,000
Less:	
Tangible and heritage fixed assets	(£6,201,000)
Restricted funds	(£1,514,000)
Designated funds	(£1,258,000)
Free financial reserves	£1,763,000

Target free financial reserves range **£900,000 - £1,800,000**

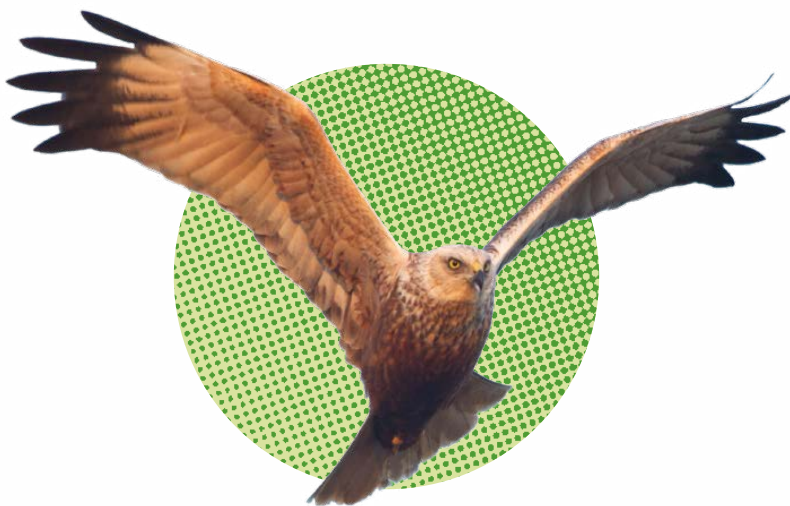
In accordance with the financial reserves policy, which was reviewed during the year, the Trust aims to hold between three and six months' core operating costs as free financial reserves which equates to between £900,000 to £1.8 million. Free financial reserves held in the income fund are currently within the target range and equate to just below 6 months' core operating costs.

Investments

The value of the Trust's investment portfolio increased to £847,000 (£836,000: 2022/23) following an improvement in market conditions. Investment income increased to £25,000 (£23,000: 2022/23). The Trust recognised a £18,000 gain (£93,000 loss: 2022/23) arising from revaluations in the year.

The investment portfolio is managed by Rathbone Greenbank to provide the Trust with a range of sound marketable investments providing a balance of regular income and opportunity for capital growth. This requires a balanced portfolio consisting of investment grade fixed interest stocks or funds of fixed interest stocks and equities.

An ethical investment policy has been adopted to ensure that the investment portfolio consists of stocks consistent with the Trust's values and aims, whilst ensuring that its investments actively support its aims and objectives. The Trust's ethical investment policy seeks to encourage investment in companies with strong sustainability policies and practices that respect and protect wildlife, communities and their wider environment.





OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

Charitable purpose

Somerset Wildlife Trust is set up to achieve three charitable objects:

1 For the benefit of the public, to advance, promote and further the conservation, maintenance, protection and enjoyment of wildlife and its habitats, including places of botanical, geographical, zoological, archaeological or scientific interest and places of natural beauty;

2 To advance the education of the public in the principles of biodiversity conservation and of sustainable development;

3 To promote research in all branches of ecology and geology. The Trust delivers its charitable purposes through its strategic objectives as described in this report.

4 Measuring our success. The Trust measures its success by:

- The Senior Leadership Team and Trust Council monitoring progress towards charitable goals and their achievement through quarterly reviews of the implementation of the annual business plan and performance against budget
- Regular dialogue with all members of the Executive Team and in particular the CEO as well as field visits to existing reserves and potential acquisitions.
- Engagement with third parties including partners, major donors and other Wildlife Trusts members.
- Qualitative feedback from Trustees, members, supporters, volunteers and staff.
- The quality and longevity of relationships with partner organisations, funders and neighbours.
- Hosting Somerset Environmental Records Centre (SERC), which collects and provides data on species and habitats across Somerset, including on Trust nature reserves, to external parties, the public and specialist groups
- Annual endorsement from Members of the report and accounts and future plans at the Annual General Meeting.
- Monitoring and reporting on complaints received.



Measuring our impact

This year the Trust undertook to review the way it more clearly monitors and measures the impact of its work – ie. how our interventions bring about positive change – and our progress against our goals.

Measuring impact in the area of engagement – our Goal 2 activity - is incredibly difficult, and we are not alone, inside and outside of the Wildlife Trust movement. We are far from experts in this field and are still learning about how best we can monitor our impact within this workstream, and are working as part of a national Wildlife Trust Working Group on this, exploring and testing a number of approaches to arrive at what might work for us, learning from the many specialist bodies working in this space. Two key changes we are primarily interested in measuring are nature connectedness and behaviour change (meaningful action for nature), alongside other indirect and unintended impacts of our work such as social inclusion. There is much more to do in the coming year to develop this work to build the best picture we can of the impact we are having on the ground and how we are contributing to creating this tipping point for nature.

Measuring our progress against Goal 1 of our strategy is also complex. Our goal is to ensure nature is improving everywhere within a resilient nature recovery network and at least 30% of land and sea are managed positively for nature in Somerset. There is currently no clear guidance from

Defra or Natural England as to which areas of land can be included in the target so Somerset Wildlife Trust is currently following the example led by the Wildlife and Countryside Link (WCL) which has taken the wording and spirit of the Kunming-Montreal Framework. Under the WCL definitions, for Somerset we estimate that just 10% of our land area is currently part of the 30x30 target largely due to our large number of SSSI's, 76% of which are in favourable or recovering status and are being managed for nature. We recognise that there is still more evidence to gather.

Launched this year The Somerset State of Nature Report however forms a critical benchmark – one that we will return to at regular intervals - that will help us collectively assess the impact of our Goal 1 work. It is from here that we will be able to track trends of change, both positive and negative, for the quality, quantity, distribution, connectivity and resilience of our habitats within the wider nature recovery network, alongside the resilience of those habitats. It will also enable us to assess the biodiversity and abundance of species that are both at risk and 'common'.

Public benefit

The Trustees confirm that they have complied with the duty in section 17 of the Charities Act 2011 to have due regard to public benefit guidance published by the Charity Commission. The Trust's public benefit is enshrined in its charitable objectives and activities – providing multiple benefits for the public which are wide-ranging and longlasting.

Restoring nature at landscape-scale

The Trust's work aims to restore nature at scale across our landscapes including by restoring, creating and protecting habitats that are or can be biodiversity-rich. There is increasing attention to how to enable development of 'ecosystem services' which offer public benefit in addition to nature restoration; for example: flood risk management, carbon storage, pollination, pollution control, improved health and wellbeing and aesthetic beauty. Government and businesses are now recognising the essential role that nature plays in supporting the economy, not least through the provision of these public goods and services. This is starting to be reflected in emerging legislation.

Land management advice for nature

Through providing advice and assistance to farmers and landowners to manage their land for the benefit of wildlife, the Trust helps to support the rural economy, the countryside and landscapes that are enjoyed and valued by the wider public.

Nature reserves

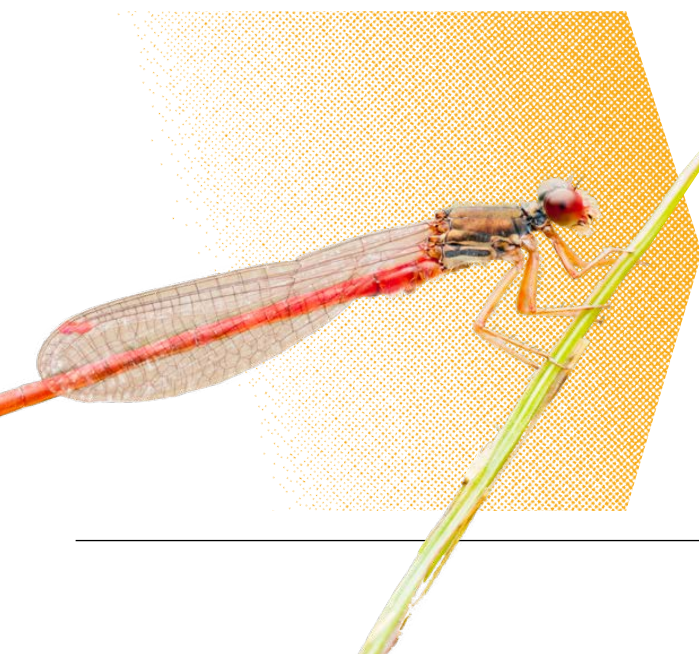
The Trust's 66 nature reserves, located throughout Somerset, are used extensively by the public for quiet recreation; many have access on clearly marked paths along with information and interpretation for visitors and visiting helps to build connection with nature and supporting health and wellbeing.

Team Wilder – a movement for nature

Team Wilder is supporting people, communities and organisations across Somerset to take action for nature to help us restore, create and protect habitats and build their connection with nature. We are committed to being an inclusive organisation and are actively working to involve more diverse communities and more young people in our work. We aim to empower them to take practical action for nature whether at home, at school or at work for their own wellbeing and to help nature recover.

Research

Evidence and advice provided by the Trust to local authorities, landowners and communities helps to ensure that decisions on policies such as land management, development, health and wellbeing take full account of the public benefit of wildlife and a healthy environment.



STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Structure

Somerset Wildlife Trust is a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity governed by its articles of association.

Somerset Wildlife Trust is one of 46 independent Wildlife Trusts working together as a federated movement known as The Wildlife Trusts, covering the UK and Crown Territories. The Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts' role, one of the 46, is defined by the Royal Charter to support The Wildlife Trusts.

Somerset Wildlife Trust has one wholly owned subsidiary, SWT (Sales) Limited. The charity owns 100% of the company's ordinary share capital. The principal activities of SWT (Sales) Limited are that of overseeing the environmental consultancy, trading under the name Somerset Wildlife Trust Consultancy, previously First Ecology.

It is based at the Trust's Callow Rock Offices. SWTC trades under SWT (Sales) Ltd and is a company limited by shares and registered in England No. 1317396.

Somerset Environmental Records Centre (SERC) was established in 1986 by Somerset County Council and Somerset Wildlife Trust. The core work of SERC is to gather, manage, supply and analyse/interpret biological and geological data and hold the county list of sites recognised for their natural value. Data gathered by SERC is used to build up a comprehensive picture of the biodiversity and geodiversity of Somerset, and help to monitor the state of the natural environment. SERC is a member of the Association of Local Environmental Records Centres and has close links to the National Biodiversity Network, and the National Federation of Biological Recorders.

South West Wildlife Fundraising Limited (SWWFL) is an Associate trading subsidiary (set up for mutual trading) and jointly owned by eight Wildlife Trusts, including Somerset Wildlife Trust, to help secure regular financial support through memberships recruited face to face. SWWFL provides membership recruitment services for Somerset, Avon, Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Hampshire and Isle of Wight, Herefordshire, Gloucestershire, Gwent, Wiltshire and Worcestershire Wildlife Trusts.

Governance

COUNCIL

Members elected to serve on Council have a dual role as a Trustee of the Charity and a Director of the company. There can be no fewer than eight and no more than 12 Trustees. All members of Council are volunteers, give freely of their time and have no beneficial interest in the group or charity. Trustees are elected by the members at the Annual General Meeting and serve for an initial three-year term. Each Trustee can serve for three consecutive terms of three years subject to re-election at the end of each three-year term. The Chair, Vice-Chair and Treasurer are elected by Council following the AGM and serve one-year terms.

In addition, each new Council member receives a full induction into the work and administration of the charity. Council members receive regular updates on the work of the Trust and any training deemed necessary to enable members to carry out their responsibilities. The Council meets quarterly.

At the Trust AGM in November 2023, six Trustees were elected for their first terms of office. Council is assisted by Committees:

This year we have updated our committee structure to be more effective in directly supporting the delivery of our Wilder Somerset

2030 strategy, and to continue to support the organisation's growth in general terms, but also as we expand into new areas of activities. All Standing Committees meet quarterly unless otherwise stated

COMMITTEES

Finance, Risk and Audit

Committee: Monitor financial management including policies and controls, act as Audit Committee, make recommendations to Council on financial policy and capital investment decisions and monitor our risk framework.

People, Culture and Resources Committee (formed Feb 2024):

Oversight of policies and key controls relating to the recruitment, development and wellbeing of staff and volunteers and monitoring of our responsiveness to Members feedback. Monitors our safeguarding policies and response and delivery of equality, diversity and inclusion.

Health and Safety Committee:

Oversight on all health and safety matters in the Trust, reviews of risk assessments and control frameworks.

Remuneration Committee:

Consider and make recommendations on the annual salary review for the Chief Executive Officer and Directors, remuneration policy and benchmarking and discretionary pay increases.

Nominations Committee (Meets as and when needed)

Supervision and lead involvement in the process for the recruitment of new Trustees as well as Non-Executive Directors of subsidiaries. Responsible for considering the balance of skills and experience of the Council and planning succession for the Chair, Vice Chair and Treasurer.

Governance Committee (biannual):

Consists of the chair of Council, the chairs of each of the Standing Committees and the CEO; it considers overall governance for the Trust in the context of the Charitable and strategic objectives of the Trust and the risks and uncertainties therein; developments in the legal or regulatory framework, including the Charity Governance Code, and the effectiveness of Council.

Risk management

Over the last year, we have taken steps to improve and strengthen our risk management systems and processes. This has been deemed necessary and appropriate due to the continued growth and diversification of our assets, partnerships and work programmes as well as our staff and volunteers. These improvements (some ongoing), include:

- Updating the risk management framework, using guidance from RSWT, to enable improved consistency and transparency in the classification and management of risks.
- Integrating risk assessment formally into the planning of all major projects starting in 2024.
- Providing risk training to senior and executive staff.
- Bringing risk management into the remit of the Finance and Audit Committee for improved Trustee oversight.

As a result, the Trust has improved its capability to manage risks proportionately in its day-to-day operations, and acknowledge that more work is required to embed the changes made. We have determined that some levels and types of risk are more acceptable than others in achieving our ambitious strategic aims.



Principal risks and uncertainties

- Leadership capacity: we have recruited three Executive roles to extend and deepen leadership, provide improved support to the CEO, and enhance our ability to deliver our strategy.
- Future funding: we are fortunate to have a strong financial position, generous donors, and access to government funding for reserves. However, creating sustained new funding to cover rising costs and enable progress is a perennial challenge. Revenue diversification is key, and we expect Green Finance and our Sales business to play prominent roles in our future funding model.
- Delivery and engagement: new partnerships and delivery approaches are needed to achieve change at the pace and scale needed.
- Health, safety and wellbeing (including safeguarding): a continued priority risk area, recognising our responsibilities to our people, members, and public. No significant incidents have occurred in the year. Our staff engagement and loyalty is high, but we believe we can always do more to provide the best for, and so achieve the best from, all our people. The new PC&R Committee ensures greater focus in this area.

Transactions involving Council members and related parties

During 2023/24 a total of £1,000 (2023: £1,000) was received from Trustees in respect of donations and membership.

Strategy and policy setting

Council is responsible for furthering the objectives of the Trust as set out in the Articles of Association. Council determines the strategic direction of the Trust through the 10-year Wilder Somerset 2030 strategy which was formally launched in May 2021. The strategy is available to download from the Trust's website.

The focus of Council's ongoing work is: supervising the strategic fit of key decisions including investments and plans for diversification of activities; monitoring delivery; and ensuring the income and expenditure of the Trust and its property and assets are managed appropriately. The Council always seeks to maintain a short term and longer term focus on the Trust's need to achieve resilient business models that are capable of sustaining nature protection and enhancement.

Staffing and remuneration

Council appoints the Chief Executive Officer and supports the appointment process for members of the Directors of the Charity. Trustees delegate to the Chief Executive Officer and Senior Leadership Team through agreement of clear strategic

objectives for the Trust which have demonstrable outcomes for wildlife in the county. Trustees monitor progress quarterly as well as ensuring that the Trust's financial affairs are managed appropriately.

The Chief Executive Officer reports to the Chair of Trustees. The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for the day to day running of the Trust and has delegated powers of authority approved by the Council. The Chief Executive Officer delegates decision-making powers through the Senior Leadership Team into the organisation.

During the year the Trust employed 75 full-time equivalent staff (2023: 71) 4 of which worked for SERC and 12 for SWT (Sales) Ltd. The Trust continues to adopt hybrid working, with many staff working primarily from their homes or elsewhere to deliver projects and manage nature reserves, with attendance at their office base and staff meetings held.

The Trust's headquarters is in Taunton with other staff based at Ford Farm, the Avalon Marshes Centre and Callow Rock. The staff are organised into functional teams, such as reserves, and also work in cross-functional teams, such as for delivering major projects.

All job descriptions are graded by the Salary Grading Panel. The Salary Grading Panel assesses each job description and grades within the Trust's grading criteria which consists of 13 levels, each of which has a corresponding salary band which is benchmarked against similar roles in the external market and other Wildlife Trusts.

The pay arrangements for the Directors Team are determined by the Chief Executive Officer and approved by the Remuneration



Committee using external and Wildlife Trusts' benchmarking. The Chief Executive Officer's salary is determined by the Remuneration Committee following representation from the Chair and Vice-Chair.

Key matters

Complaints

The Trust treats all complaints seriously. In the year 2023/24 the Trust received 3 complaints (2023: 3). No complaints were received in 2023/24 about our fundraising (2023: 0).

All of the complaints were responded to within seven days. Complaints are individually reviewed by the relevant Senior Leadership Team staff and monitored by the Chief Executive Officer and Trustees as part of a system for continuous improvement.

How we fundraise

As a charity, fundraising is essential to Somerset Wildlife Trust's ability to meet our core purpose and deliver public benefit. We receive most of our financial support from grants and individuals, including our members.

We are committed to a transparent and ethical approach to all our fundraising activity. We make every effort to ensure that our fundraising activity never feels unreasonably intrusive, persistent or pressurised, but rather focuses on inspiring support and celebrating the impact of fundraised income.

Our members and supporters are the foundation of everything we do and our work is only possible thanks to their generosity and their commitment to take action locally for nature.

We do:

- recruit new members face to face at venues and events across Somerset, including Trust nature reserves, and via our website (including as part of national Wildlife Trust campaigns), telephone and occasional targeted door drops;
- send appeal letters and other fundraising communications to selected supporters who have opted-in to marketing by post and/or digitally;
- seek philanthropic support from major donors, patrons, trusts, foundations, companies and other grant givers;
- invite donations via our website, other giving platforms and collection boxes;
- promote the importance of supporting our work, including via gifts in wills and gifts in memory;
- organise online fundraising auctions and other fundraising events; and
- encourage our members, supporters and local businesses to fundraise in aid of our work (community fundraising) as part of taking action for nature - Team Wilder.

We do not:

- sell or pass on supporter details to any other organisation or buy lists of other charities' donors.

Our members and supporters have the opportunity to express their preferences on how they are contacted and can change these at any time, by contacting us.

We are registered with the Fundraising Regulator and committed to follow its Code of Practice, which sets out standards of behaviour of fundraisers.

We are signed up to the Fundraising Preference Service to enable individuals to opt out from receiving fundraising communications from us and received no requests from this service to opt out in the year.

We ensure that fundraising is conducted to the highest quality and that individuals who may be in vulnerable circumstances are protected, including by continually updating our database to prevent communications being sent to any vulnerable people who have been identified.

Our fundraising is mainly carried out by Trust staff with support from a very limited number of carefully selected professional fundraisers which are fundraising agencies or third-party service providers which act as agents in raising funds on the charity's behalf.

Face to face fundraising at venues and events is conducted on our behalf by staff of South West Wildlife Fundraising Limited (SWWFL), an associate trading subsidiary jointly owned by Somerset Wildlife Trust and seven other Wildlife Trusts. SWWFL is a corporate member of the Chartered Institute of Fundraising which conduct 'mystery shopping' surveys with SWWFL's face-to-face fundraisers to monitor quality.

We seek feedback from all new members until recently using a third-party service, Quality Telephone Services (QTS) and now by survey sent by email to understand their experience of joining us, including feedback on SWWFL recruiters, thus identifying any areas where we can make further improvements. QTS are also occasionally used to make outbound telephone calls to confirm Gift Aid status.

We use Work for Good to enable local small businesses to fundraise for us via sales of their products as commercial participators and online platforms for our virtual fundraising auction and matched annual fundraising appeals run by the Big Give.

Health and safety

The Health and Safety Committee meets quarterly and presents reporting to Council after each meeting. The health and safety of employees, contractors, volunteers and members of the general public are of paramount importance to the Trust. Accidents are recorded, there were 3 involving staff, 4 involving volunteers and 1 contractor injury causing lost time. They were caused by a variety of factors but working practices and use of protective equipment are areas for continued focus. We also record near misses.

At a strategic level our approach to Ash Dieback clearance has been governed by the need to ensure public safety on our Reserves and adjoining land. We recognise this work can cause concern and, for public safety, signs and barriers are used to restrict access to Reserves where work is planned and ongoing.

Safeguarding

As an organisation that works with children and vulnerable adults, the Trust acknowledges its duty of care to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and vulnerable adults. We are committed to ensuring our safeguarding practice reflects statutory responsibilities, government guidance and complies with best practice and regulatory requirements wherever we operate as a charity. Our safeguarding policy is published on our

website at www.somersetwildlife/policies/safeguarding.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The Trust is committed to being inclusive in all aspects of our work from staff to trustees, volunteers to participants at our events. By recognising, respecting and valuing differences, and adopting more diverse perspectives, our staff, trustees, volunteers and supporters can become more effective ambassadors for nature as they can reach wider audiences. As such, equality, diversity and inclusion are enshrined in our core values, our Wilder Somerset 2030 strategy, our policies and activities.

This year we launched our EDI action plan. The plan provides a framework for the delivery of EDI in support of the Trust's strategy and to ensure that everyone can benefit from and take action for nature. It places diversity and inclusion at the heart of our culture, supporting us in our endeavours to reflect the society we work within, as well as providing a barometer for excellence.

Carbon impact

The Trust has committed to be a Net-Zero Carbon organisation by 2030 and to do this will mitigate its climate impacts (such as buildings, staff transport, landholdings,

purchasing and waste). Our landholdings are our major sources, including cattle grazing and we have researched this area in detail to understand the implications for us. Carbon release from dried out peat, as on Honeygar, is a key area of focus for us and we do detailed research into the impact of holding water on peat to lock in the carbon and avoid emissions. We are working with The Wildlife Trusts on annual carbon reporting which will be published in the future.

The Trust is using the Wilder Carbon process developed by Kent Wildlife Trust to ensure we can benchmark accurately with other Wildlife Trusts and measure our footprint and sequestration using the best available data and emission factors recommended by DEFRA/ Natural England.

A Climate and Nature Emergency Working Group of key staff and trustees has been established to monitor progress towards net-zero and the Trust's carbon footprint is measured each year.

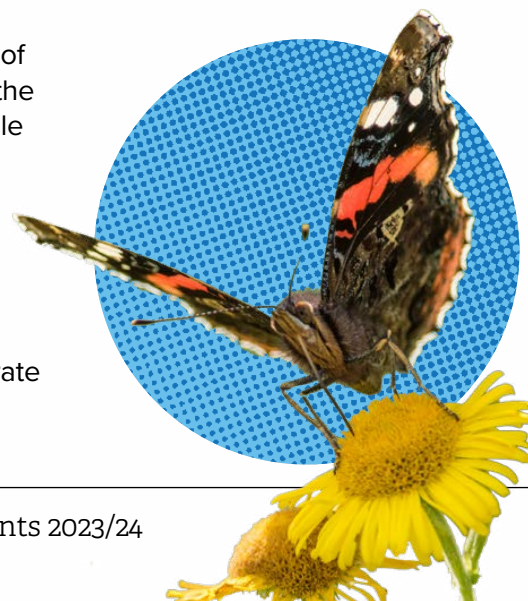
Environment Policy

Our Environment Policy considers the direct impacts of all our activities including our built properties, landholding and reserves management, purchasing and transport. The Policy is available on our website.

The Trustees' Report, including the Strategic Report, was approved by the Trustees on 6 August 2024 and signed on their behalf by:



Rupert Taylor
Chair



STATEMENT OF TRUSTEES' RESPONSIBILITIES

The Trustees (who are also directors of Somerset Wildlife Trust for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing the Strategic Report, Trustees' Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards including Financial Reporting Standard 102; the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company law requires the Trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and the group and of the income and expenditure of the charitable group for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the Trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP;
- make judgments and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements, and
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charitable company will continue in business.

The Trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable company and the group and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

In so far as the Trustees are aware:

- there is no relevant audit information of which the charitable company's auditors are unaware, and
- the Trustees have taken all steps that they ought to have taken to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the auditors are aware of that information.

The Trustees are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the corporate and financial information included on the charitable company's website. Legislation in the United Kingdom governing the preparation and dissemination of financial statements may differ from legislation in other jurisdictions.



Rupert Taylor
Chair



PART 4:



Independent auditor's report





INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

to the Members of Somerset Wildlife Trust

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Somerset Wildlife (the 'parent charitable company') and its subsidiary (the 'group') for the year ended 31 March 2024, which comprise the consolidated Statement of Financial Activities, the consolidated and parent charitable company Balance Sheets, the consolidated Statement of Cash Flows, and Notes to the Financial Statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including Financial Reporting Standard 102: The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the group's and of the parent charitable company's

affairs as at 31 March 2024 and of the group's incoming resources and application of resources for the year then ended;

- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the group in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these

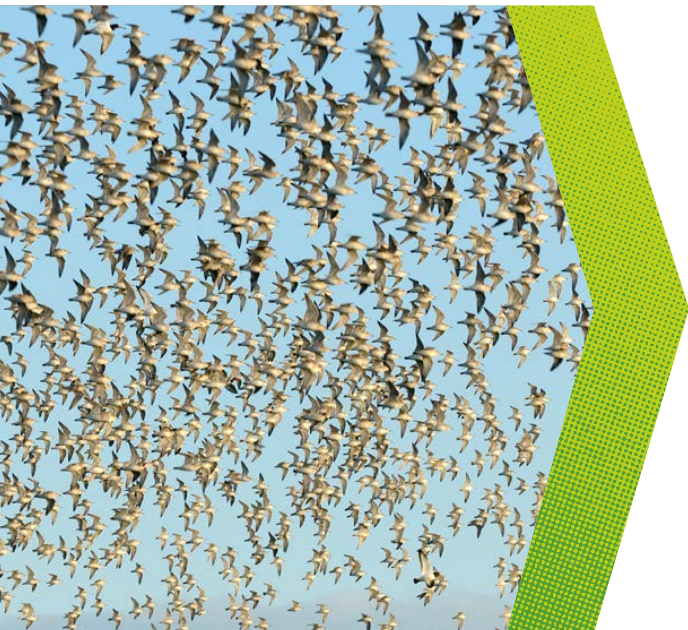
requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the trustee's use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the entity's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least 12 months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the directors with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.



Other information

The trustees are responsible for the other information. The other information comprises the information included in the Annual Report, other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with our audit of the financial statements, our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether there is a material misstatement in the financial statements or a material misstatement of the other information. If, based on the work

we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinion on other matter prescribed by the Companies Act 2006

In our opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit: the information given in the Annual Report, which includes the Directors' Report and Strategic Report prepared for the purposes of company law for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements; and the Directors' Report and the Strategic Report included within the Annual Report have been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

In the light of the knowledge and understanding of the group and parent charitable company and their environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified

material misstatements in the Directors' Report and Strategic Report included within the Annual Report.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters where the Companies Act 2006 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept by the parent charitable company, or returns adequate for our audit have not been received from branches not visited by us; or
- the parent charitable company financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- certain disclosures of trustees' remuneration specified by law are not made; or
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit.

Responsibilities of trustees

As explained more fully in the Statement of Trustees' Responsibilities, the trustees (who are also the directors of the parent charitable company for the purposes of company law) are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the trustees determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the trustees are responsible for assessing the group's and parent charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the trustees either intend to liquidate the group or charitable company or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material

misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

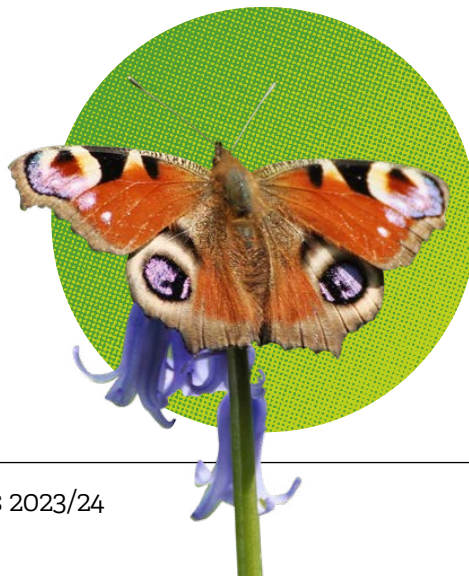
Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We design procedures in line with our responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of irregularities, including fraud. The extent to which our procedures are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud is detailed below:

The extent to which the audit was considered capable of detecting irregularities including fraud Our approach to identifying and assessing the risks of material misstatement in respect of irregularities, including fraud and non-compliance with laws and regulations, was as follows:

- the engagement partner ensured that the engagement team collectively had the appropriate competence, capabilities and skills to identify or recognise non-compliance with applicable laws and regulations;
- we identified the laws and regulations applicable to the company through discussions with management, and from our commercial knowledge and experience of the charity sector;
- we focused on specific laws and regulations which we considered may have a direct material effect on the financial statements or the operations of the company, including the Companies Act 2006, Charity Act 2011, and employment legislation;
- we assessed the extent of compliance with the laws and regulations identified above through making enquiries of management and considering legal correspondence; and
- identified laws and regulations were communicated within the audit team regularly and the team remained alert to instances of non-compliance throughout the audit.

We assessed the susceptibility of the group's financial statements to material misstatement, including obtaining an understanding of how fraud might occur, by:

- making enquiries of management as to where they considered there was susceptibility to fraud, their knowledge of actual, suspected and alleged fraud; and



- considering the internal controls in place to mitigate risks of fraud and non-compliance with laws and regulations.

To address the risk of fraud through management bias and override of controls, we:

- performed analytical procedures to identify any unusual or unexpected relationships;
- tested journal entries to identify unusual transactions;
- assessed whether judgements and assumptions made in determining the accounting estimates were indicative of potential bias; and
- investigated the rationale behind significant or unusual transactions.

In response to the risk of irregularities and non-compliance with laws and regulations, we designed procedures which included, but were not limited to:

- agreeing financial statement disclosures to underlying supporting documentation;
- reading the minutes of meetings of those charged with governance;
- enquiring of management as to actual and potential litigation, claims and breaches of relevant legislation; and
- reviewing correspondence with the Charity Commission and other relevant regulators.

There are inherent limitations in our audit procedures described above. The more removed that laws

and regulations are from financial transactions, the less likely it is that we would become aware of non-compliance. Auditing standards also limit the audit procedures required to identify non-compliance with laws and regulations to enquiry of the directors and other management and the inspection of regulatory and legal correspondence, if any.

Material misstatements that arise due to fraud can be harder to detect than those that arise from error as they may involve deliberate concealment or collusion.

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website at www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of our auditor's report.

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the group and parent charitable company's members, as a body, in accordance with Chapter 3 of Part

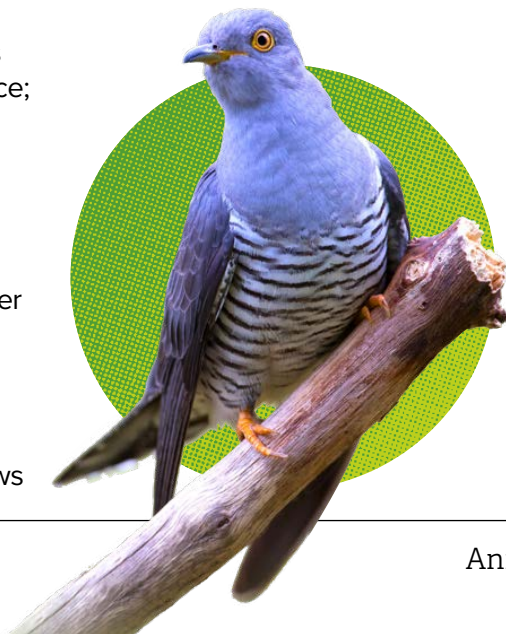
16 of the Companies Act 2006. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the group and parent charitable company's members and trustees those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the group and parent charitable company and the group and parent charitable company's members as a body and the parent charitable company's trustees as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.



.....
Michelle Ferris BSC (Hons) FCA
DChA (Senior Statutory Auditor)
For and on behalf of Albert
Goodman LLP, Statutory Auditor

Goodwood House
Blackbrook Park Avenue
Taunton
Somerset
TA1 2PX

Date: 6 August 2024



PART 5:



Financial statements

- ▶ Consolidated statement of financial activities
- ▶ Consolidated and Trust balance sheets as at 31 March 2024
- ▶ Consolidated statement of cash flows for the year ended 31 March 2024
- ▶ Notes forming part of the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2024



Membership
income:

£890,000



CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

(Including consolidated income and expenditure account)

For the year ended 31 March 2024

	Notes	Unrestricted Funds		Restricted Funds £'000	Endowment Funds £'000	Total Funds 2024 £'000	Total Funds 2023 £'000
		General £'000	Designated £'000				
Income from:							
Membership, donations and legacies	2	1,345	-	730	-	2,075	2,027
Charitable activities:							
More space for nature - nature recovery	3	194	-	771	-	965	1,659
More space for nature - nature reserves	3	438	-	147	-	585	601
A movement for nature – Team Wilder	3	1	-	292	-	293	330
Telling Somerset's story – Somerset Environmental Records Centre	3	198	-	23	-	221	158
Other trading activities (including SWT (Sales) Ltd)	4	634	-	-	-	634	600
Investments	5	132	-	-	-	132	61
Total		2,942	-	1,963	-	4,905	5,436
Expenditure on:							
Raising funds:							
Cost of raising funds	6	313	14	-	-	327	285
Membership recruitment and retention	6	296	-	-	-	296	283
Merchandising costs	6	2	-	-	-	2	2
Investment management fees	6	5	-	-	-	5	7
SWT (Sales) Ltd	6	650	-	-	-	650	589
Charitable activities:							
More space for nature - nature recovery	6	231	23	1,043	-	1,297	1,627
More space for nature - nature reserves	6	647	75	271	-	993	803
A movement for nature – Team Wilder	6	407	-	481	-	888	796
Telling Somerset's story – Somerset Environmental Records Centre	6	220	-	23	-	243	219
Total		2,771	112	1,818	-	4,701	4,611
Net gain/(loss) on investments		18	-	-	-	18	(93)
Net income/(expenditure)		189	(112)	145	-	222	732
Transfers between funds	21	660	(337)	(323)	-	-	-
Net movement in funds		849	(449)	(178)	-	222	732
Reconciliation of funds							
Fund balances brought forward at 1 April 2023		1,368	4,381	1,692	3,073	10,514	9,782
Fund balances carried forward at 31 March 2024		2,217	3,932	1,514	3,073	10,736	10,514

All of the above results are derived from continuing activities. All gains and losses recognised in the year are included above. The notes on pages 78 to 93 form part of these financial statements.

CONSOLIDATED AND TRUST BALANCE SHEETS

As at 31 March 2024

	Notes	Group		Charity	
		2024 £'000	2023 £'000	2024 £'000	2023 £'000
Fixed assets					
Tangible assets	11	1,413	1,491	1,391	1,463
Heritage assets	11	4,788	4,460	4,788	4,460
Investments	12	847	836	847	836
		7,048	6,787	7,026	6,759
Current assets					
Stock	13	1	1	1	1
Debtors	14	1,575	1,569	1,625	1,545
Deposit accounts		2,299	2,192	2,299	2,192
Cash at bank and in hand		290	656	259	645
		4,165	4,418	4,184	4,383
Liabilities					
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	15	477	641	465	578
Net current assets		3,688	3,777	3,719	3,805
Total assets less current liabilities		10,736	10,564	10,745	10,564
Provisions for liabilities	16	-	50	-	50
Total net assets		10,736	10,514	10,745	10,514
The funds of the charity					
Endowment funds		3,073	3,073	3,073	3,073
Restricted funds		1,514	1,692	1,514	1,692
Designated funds		3,932	4,381	3,932	4,381
Unrestricted funds		2,217	1,368	2,226	1,368
Total charity funds	20	10,736	10,514	10,745	10,514

The notes on pages 78 to 93 form part of these financial statements.

The financial statements on pages 74 to 93 were approved by the Trustees on 6 August 2024 and signed on their behalf by:



Rupert Taylor
Chair



Stephen Rogers
Treasurer

Somerset Wildlife Trust
Registered company number 818162

CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS

For the year ended 31 March 2024

	Note	2024 £'000	2023 £'000
Cash flows from operating activities:			
Net cash provided by operating activities	25	(11)	192
Cash flows from investing activities:			
Dividends, interest and rental income		132	61
Proceeds from the sale of property, plant and equipment		16	5
Purchase of property, plant and equipment		(403)	(538)
Proceeds from sale of investments		142	262
Purchase of investments		(116)	(249)
Net cash used in investing activities		(229)	(459)
Change in cash and cash equivalents in the reporting period		(240)	(267)
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the reporting period		2,865	3,132
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the reporting period	26	2,625	2,865

The notes on pages 78 to 93 form part of these financial statements.



Total income from
donations and appeals:

£875,000

NOTES FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

For the year ended 31 March 2024

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

(a) Charitable company status

The charity is a company limited by guarantee and does not have any share capital. The liability of the guarantors, who are the members, is limited to £1 per guarantor. At 31 March 2024 the charity had 22,692 members. The company is registered in England and Wales. The registered office address is 34 Wellington Road, Taunton, Somerset, TA1 5AW. On behalf of the members, the Council controls the company.

(b) Basis of preparation

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2019) – (Charities SORP (FRS 102) 2019 the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) and the Companies Act 2006.

The financial statements have been prepared under the historic cost convention with the exception of listed investments which are included at their fair value.

The Trust meets the definition of a public benefit entity under FRS 102.

(c) Preparation of the accounts on a going concern basis

The Trustees consider that there are no material uncertainties about the Trust's ability to continue as a going concern.

(d) Group financial statements

The financial statements consolidate the results of the charity and its wholly owned subsidiary SWT (Sales) Limited on a line-by-line basis. A separate Statement

of Financial Activities and Income and Expenditure Account for the charity has not been presented because the Trust has taken advantage of the exemption afforded by section 408 of the Companies Act 2006. The surplus in the year for the charity was £222,000 (2023: £732,000). Note 23 gives full details of the results of the subsidiary undertaking for the year to 31 March 2024.

(e) Fund accounting

Unrestricted funds

Unrestricted funds are available for use at the discretion of the Trustees in furtherance of the general objectives of the charity. Certain unrestricted funds have been designated by the Trustees for specific purposes.

Designated funds

Designated funds are unrestricted funds that have been set aside by Council for a specific purpose.

Restricted funds

Restricted funds are funds that are used in accordance with specific restrictions imposed by donors or which have been raised by the charity for particular purposes.

Endowment funds

The nature reserves endowment fund represents amounts received specifically for, and expended on, the purchase of nature reserves.

(f) Income

All income is included in the SOFA when the charity is legally entitled to the income and the amount can be quantified with reasonable accuracy.

Income for works that have been completed but has not yet been received is included as accrued income. The stage of completion is determined by comparing the services rendered to date to the accepted quotation or contract.

For legacies, entitlement is taken as the earlier of the date on which either: the charity is aware that probate has been granted and notification has been made by the executor(s) to the Trust that a distribution will be made, or when a distribution is received from the estate.

Grants are included in the SOFA in the year they are receivable and when any performance conditions attached to the grant have been met.

Income from investments and from rental income is included in the SOFA in the year it is receivable.

The total income in respect of membership receivable is included as membership in note 2. Income from life membership is included in the SOFA in the year in which it is receivable.

Gifts in kind are included in the SOFA at their estimated current value in the year in which they are receivable.

Trading income is included in the SOFA in the year in which it is receivable.

(g) Expenditure

Liabilities are recognised as expenditure as soon as there is a legal or constructive obligation committing the charity to that expenditure, it is probable that settlement will be required and the amount of the obligation can be measured reliably.

All expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis. All expenses including support costs and governance costs are allocated or apportioned to the applicable expenditure headings. Where an employee works in more than one department, their costs are allocated on the basis of time worked in each department. Certain overhead costs, such as relevant insurance premiums, are allocated on the basis of staff numbers, while others are allocated on an actual usage basis.

Irrecoverable VAT is charged against the expenditure heading for which it was incurred.

(h) Tangible and heritage fixed assets and depreciation

Heritage assets are assets of historical or scientific importance that are held to advance the preservation, conservation and educational objectives of the charity and through public access contribute to the nation's culture and education at either a national or local level. Freehold nature reserves are included in heritage fixed assets at their acquisition costs and they are not revalued or depreciated. The charity aims to preserve and enhance its nature reserves, which are not held for their resale potential. The market value of the reserves is of no practical relevance to the charity's activities. No depreciation is provided because the reserves have an indefinite life.

The costs of leasehold nature reserves are amortised over the period of the lease.

All other tangible fixed assets are held at cost less accumulated depreciation. Depreciation is provided on all other tangible fixed assets as follows:

Freehold property 2% on a straight line basis
Computers on a straight line basis over 3 years
Plant and equipment 15% on written down value
Motor vehicles 25% on written down value
Office equipment, furniture and fittings 15% on written down value

(i) Investments

Listed Investments are stated at fair value which equates to market value at the balance sheet date. The SOFA includes all net gains and losses arising on revaluations and disposals throughout the year. The investment in the subsidiary is stated at cost.

(j) Stock

Stock consists of publications for distribution to members and purchased goods for resale. Stock is valued at the lower of cost or net realisable value, after making due allowance for obsolete and slow moving items.

(k) Cash and cash equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents include cash in hand, deposits and other short-term highly liquid investments that are readily convertible to known amounts of cash with insignificant risk of change in value.

(l) Financial instruments

The Trust only has financial assets and financial liabilities of a kind that qualify as basic financial instruments as defined in FRS 102. The financial assets and liabilities of the Trust and their measurement are as follows:

Financial assets – trade debtors, amounts owed by subsidiary company, legacies receivable other debtors are basic financial instruments and are debt instruments measured at amortised cost. Investment portfolios are basic financial instruments measured at fair value through the income and expenditure account. Prepayments are not financial instruments.

Cash at bank and deposit accounts are classified as a basic financial instrument and measured at face value.

Financial liabilities which includes trade creditors, accruals and other creditors are financial instruments and are measured at amortised cost.

(m) Pension costs

The Trust operates a defined contribution pension scheme. Pension contributions in relation to the defined contribution scheme are recognised as an expense in the statement of financial activities as incurred. The Trust contributes 7% of gross annual salary for participating employees.

(n) Operating leases

Rentals paid under operating leases are charged to the SOFA as incurred.

(o) Volunteer support

The Trust receives support from a wide variety of volunteers. It is not practical to place a value on the time volunteered by all these persons, due to the variety of duties performed, the differences in time spent, and the sheer number of volunteers who kindly donated their time.

(p) Critical accounting estimates and judgements

The preparation of the financial statements requires management to make judgements, estimates and assumptions that affect the application of policies and reported amounts of assets and liabilities, income and expenses. Estimates and judgements are continually evaluated and are based on historical experience and other factors, including expectations of future events that are believed to be reasonable under the circumstances. The resulting accounting estimates will, by definition, seldom equal the related actual results.

The Trustees are of the opinion that there are no other estimates or assumptions that have a significant risk of causing a material adjustment to the carrying amounts of assets and liabilities within the next financial year.

During 2019/20 the progression of Ash Dieback disease on the Trust's nature reserves became apparent. A specialist report was commissioned during the year, and as a result, a provision of £600,000 was recognised in the year for the estimated future cost of removing dangerous trees in priority areas; primarily along roads and paths. Whilst there will continue to be ongoing works associated with Ash Dieback disease the emergency work has now been completed. Further details are included in note 16.

(q) Provisions

The Trust recognises a provision where it has a liability which is of uncertain timing or amount. Movements in provisions are recognised in the SOFA in the period in which they occur. Provisions are discounted where the time impact of money is material.

2. MEMBERSHIP, DONATIONS AND LEGACIES

	Unrestricted £'000	Restricted £'000	Total 2024 £'000	Unrestricted £'000	Restricted £'000	Total 2023 £'000
Membership	890	-	890	856	-	856
Donations and appeals	145	730	875	155	746	901
Legacies	310	-	310	270	-	270
	1,345	730	2,075	1,281	746	2,027

3. INCOME FROM CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

	Unrestricted £'000	Restricted £'000	Total 2024 £'000	Unrestricted £'000	Restricted £'000	Total 2023 £'000
More space for nature - nature recovery						
DEFRA	-	172	172	-	23	23
Natural England	-	327	327	-	660	660
Statutory body grants	-	72	72	-	115	115
Other grants	-	200	200	-	810	810
Consultancy fees	194	-	194	51	-	51
	194	771	965	51	1,608	1,659
More space for nature - nature reserves						
DEFRA	418	26	444	431	6	437
Statutory body grants	-	-	-	-	1	1
Other grants	-	121	121	-	135	135
Grazing licences and property lettings	19	-	19	16	-	16
Wood and firewood sales	1	-	1	12	-	12
	438	147	585	459	142	601
A movement for nature - Team Wilder						
DEFRA	-	3	3	-	-	-
Natural England	-	-	-	-	2	2
Statutory body grants	-	17	17	-	61	61
Other grants	1	272	273	-	267	267
	1	292	293	-	330	330
Telling Somerset's story - Somerset's Environmental Records Centre						
Other grants	-	23	23	-	17	17
Service level agreements	92	-	92	65	-	65
Data services	96	-	96	76	-	76
Sales income	10	-	10	-	-	-
	198	23	221	141	17	158
	831	1,233	2,064	651	2,097	2,748

4. INCOME FROM OTHER TRADING ACTIVITIES

	Charity £'000	SWT (Sales) Ltd (see note 23) £'000	Total 2024 £'000	Charity £'000	SWT (Sales) Ltd (see note 23) £'000	Total 2023 £'000
Shop sales	2	-	2	2	-	2
Fundraising events	7	-	7	27	-	27
Other fundraising activities	72	-	72	41	-	41
SWT (Sales) Ltd (including First Ecology)	-	553	553	-	530	530
	81	553	634	70	530	600

5 INVESTMENT INCOME

	Unrestricted £'000	Restricted £'000	Total 2024 £'000	Unrestricted £'000	Restricted £'000	Total 2023 £'000
Dividends receivable from equity shares	25	-	25	23	-	23
Interest receivable from bank and deposit accounts	107	-	107	38	-	38
	132	-	132	61	-	61

6. BREAKDOWN OF EXPENDITURE

	Activities undertaken directly £'000	Support costs £'000	Total 2024 £'000	Activities undertaken directly £'000	Support costs £'000	Total 2023 £'000
Expenditure on raising funds						
Cost of raising funds	253	74	327	215	70	285
Membership recruitment and retention	257	39	296	244	39	283
Merchandising costs	2	-	2	2	-	2
Investment management fees	5	-	5	7	-	7
SWT (Sales) Ltd (including First Ecology)	525	125	650	487	102	589
	1,042	238	1,280	955	211	1,166
Charitable activities						
More space for nature - nature recovery	1,161	136	1,297	1,489	138	1,627
More space for nature - nature reserves	851	142	993	673	130	803
A movement for nature - Team Wilder	685	203	888	596	200	796
Telling Somerset's story - Somerset Environmental Records Centre	198	45	243	181	38	219
	2,895	526	3,421	2,939	506	3,445
	3,937	764	4,701	3,894	717	4,611

SUPPORT COST BREAKDOWN BY ACTIVITY

	Costs of generating voluntary income £'000	Membership recruitment and retention £'000	SWT (Sales) Ltd £'000	More space for nature - nature recovery £'000	More space for nature - nature reserves £'000	A movement for nature - Team Wilder £'000	Telling Somerset's story - Somerset Environment Records Centre £'000	Total 2024 £'000	Total 2023 £'000
Finance	11	2	27	30	31	30	10	141	130
HR/Staff support	7	1	17	18	19	18	6	86	83
Office costs	8	2	20	22	23	21	7	103	73
Property and motor vehicles	6	1	16	17	18	17	6	81	74
Recoverable VAT	(5)	-	-	(3)	(15)	(3)	-	(26)	(8)
Marketing	29	28	1	2	16	72	1	149	155
Information technology	9	2	23	26	27	25	8	120	105
National support	4	1	10	11	11	11	4	52	50
Insurance	1	-	2	2	2	2	1	10	6
Governance	4	1	9	10	11	10	3	48	49
	74	38	125	135	143	203	46	764	717

BASIS OF ALLOCATION

Finance	Headcount
HR/staff support	Headcount
Office costs	Headcount
Property and motor vehicles	Headcount
Recoverable VAT	Actual resources expended
Marketing	Actual resources expended
Information technology	Headcount
National support	Headcount
Insurance	Headcount
Governance	Headcount

7. OTHER COST DISCLOSURES

	Total 2024 £'000	Total 2023 £'000
Depreciation	139	111
Auditors' remuneration:		
Audit fees	13	13
(Profit) on disposal of fixed assets	(2)	-

8. STAFF COSTS

	Total 2024 £'000	Total 2023 £'000
Wages and salaries	2,362	2,215
Social security costs	219	216
Pension costs	153	146
	2,734	2,577

The number of employees whose remuneration exceeded £60,000 was as follows:

	Total 2024	Total 2023
£60,000 - £69,999	-	1
£70,000 - £79,999	1	1
	1	2

Total remuneration of key management personnel in the period was £504,000 (2023: £496,000).

The key management personnel of the group and the parent charity comprise the Trustees, Chief Executive Officer, Director of Engagement, Director of Nature Recovery, Director of Fundraising and Marketing/ Deputy CEO, Head of Nature Reserves and Land Management, Head of Nature Recovery, Head of Engagement, Head of Communications, Head of Fundraising, Head of Innovation and Science, Head of People, Culture and Resources, Director of Commercial and Nature Based Solutions and Head of Finance.

The average number of employees during the year, analysed by function, was:

	2024 Number	2023 Number
Charitable activities	78	73
Raising funds	8	10
Governance	1	1
	87	84

The average number of full-time equivalent employees during the year totalled 75 (2023: 71).

9. TRUSTEE EMOLUMENTS

	Total 2024 £'000	Total 2023 £'000
Donations received from Trustees	1	1

Trustees did not receive any remuneration or benefits in kind during either year. One trustee was reimbursed for travel expenses during the year (2023: one).

10. PENSION COSTS

Defined contribution scheme

The Trust contributes 7% of annual salary to employees' current pension schemes, all of which are now defined contribution in nature. The pension charge for the year in respect of these contributions amounted to £153,000 (2023: £146,000).

11. TANGIBLE AND HERITAGE FIXED ASSETS

Group

	Nature reserves		Freehold and leasehold property £'000	Plant and equipment £'000	Vehicles £'000	Office equipment £'000	Total £'000
	Freehold (Heritage funds) £'000	Leasehold £'000					
Cost							
At 1 April 2023	4,460	104	1,146	695	190	302	6,897
Additions	328	-	-	29	17	29	403
Disposals	-	-	(13)	(11)	(7)	(2)	(33)
At 31 March 2024	4,788	104	1,133	713	200	329	7,267
Depreciation							
At 1 April 2023	-	104	151	339	139	213	946
Charge for the year	-	-	23	57	17	42	139
Disposals	-	-	-	(11)	(7)	(1)	(19)
At 31 March 2024	-	104	174	385	149	254	1,066
Net book value							
At 31 March 2024	4,788	-	959	328	51	75	6,201
At 31 March 2023	4,460	-	995	356	51	89	5,951

Charity

	Nature reserves		Freehold and leasehold property £'000	Plant and equipment £'000	Vehicles £'000	Office equipment £'000	Total £'000
	Freehold (Heritage funds) £'000	Leasehold £'000					
Cost							
At 1 April 2023	4,460	104	1,146	653	190	245	6,798
Additions	328	-	-	29	17	25	399
Disposals	-	-	(13)	(11)	(7)	-	(31)
At 31 March 2024	4,788	104	1,133	671	200	270	7,166
Depreciation							
At 1 April 2023	-	104	151	316	139	165	875
Charge for the year	-	-	23	54	17	36	130
Disposals	-	-	-	(11)	(7)	-	(18)
At 31 March 2024	-	104	174	359	149	201	987
Net book value							
At 31 March 2024	4,788	-	959	312	51	69	6,179
At 31 March 2023	4,460	-	995	337	51	80	5,923

Heritage fixed assets

Heritage assets are represented as freehold nature reserves above. A summary of transactions relating to heritage assets over the last five years is as follows:

	2024 £'000	2023 £'000	2022 £'000	2021 £'000	2020 £'000
Cost of acquisitions	323	187	1,144	108	1
Value of donated assets	5	-	-	-	-
Carrying amount of disposals	-	-	-	-	-
Proceeds of disposals*	-	-	35	-	-
Value of impairment	-	-	-	-	-

*Proceeds of disposals in 2022 represents the sale of land that was donated to Trust.

12. INVESTMENTS

Group

	Listed Securities £'000	Cash holdings £'000	Total 2024 £'000	Total 2023 £'000
Cost				
At 1 April 2023	769	18	787	691
Additions	116	141	257	511
Disposals	(140)	(123)	(263)	(415)
At 31 March 2024	745	36	781	787
Revaluations				
Unrealised gains at 1 April 2023	49	-	49	244
Net gains/(losses) arising on revaluations in the year	18	-	18	(93)
Disposals/reverse revaluations	(1)	-	(1)	(102)
Unrealised gains at 31 March 2024	66	-	66	49
Fair value at 31 March 2024	811	36	847	836

Charity

	Listed Securities £'000	Cash holdings £'000	Total 2024 £'000	Total 2023 £'000
Cost				
At 1 April 2023	769	18	787	691
Additions	116	141	257	511
Disposals	(140)	(123)	(263)	(415)
At 31 March 2024	745	36	781	787
Revaluations				
Unrealised gains at 1 April 2023	49	-	49	244
Net gains/(losses) arising on revaluations in the year	18	-	18	(93)
Disposals/reverse revaluations	(1)	-	(1)	(102)
Unrealised gains at 31 March 2024	66	-	66	49
Fair value at 31 March 2024	811	36	847	836

At 31 March 2024 the charity had one wholly owned subsidiary, SWT (Sales) Limited. The charity owns 100% of the company's ordinary share capital. The principal activity of SWT (Sales) Limited is that of environmental consultancy work (see note 23).

13. STOCKS

	Group		Charity	
	2024 £'000	2023 £'000	2024 £'000	2023 £'000
Stocks	1	1	1	1
	1	1	1	1

14. DEBTORS

	Group		Charity	
	2024	2023	2024	2023
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Trade debtors	711	833	581	489
Other debtors	76	18	76	20
Prepayments and accrued income	427	521	398	451
Legacies receivable	361	197	361	197
Amounts owed by subsidiary company	-	-	209	388
	1,575	1,569	1,625	1,545

Other debtors includes £nil (2023: £nil) due after more than one year.

15. CREDITORS

	Group		Charity	
	2024	2023	2024	2023
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Amounts falling due within one year				
Trade creditors	263	278	258	276
Other creditors and accruals	214	363	207	302
	477	641	465	578

16. PROVISIONS FOR LIABILITIES

	Group		Charity	
	2024	2023	2024	2023
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Provisions				
Balance at 1 April 2023	50	289	50	289
Provisions recognised in the year	-	-	-	-
Provisions utilised in the year	(50)	(239)	(50)	(239)
Balance at 31 March 2024	-	50	-	50

17. FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS

Categorisation of financial instruments

	Group		Charity	
	2024	2023	2024	2023
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Financial assets measured at fair value through the income and expenditure account	847	836	847	836
Financial assets that are debt instruments measured at amortised cost	1,148	1,048	1,227	1,093
	1,995	1,884	2,074	1,929

Item of income, expenditure, gain or losses

	Group				Charity			
	Income £'000	Expense £'000	Net gains £'000	Net losses £'000	Income £'000	Expense £'000	Net gains £'000	Net losses £'000
2024								
Financial assets measured at fair value through the income and expenditure account	25	5	18	-	25	5	18	-
	25	5	18	-	25	5	18	-
2023								
Financial assets measured at fair value through the income and expenditure account	23	7	-	(93)	23	7	-	(93)
	23	7	-	(93)	23	7	-	(93)

18. OPERATING LEASE COMMITMENTS

Minimum lease payments on non-cancellable operating leases fall due as follows:

	Group		Charity	
	2024	2023	2024	2023
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Within one year	8	5	8	5
Due one to five years	5	1	5	1
	13	6	13	6

19. POST BALANCE SHEET EVENTS

The following transactions took place after the balance sheet date but prior to the approval of the financial statements. These are non-adjusting post balance sheet events in accordance with FRS 102.

Land acquisition

The Trust has purchased 31.57 hectares of land at Sharpham for £748,000. The purchase was completed in June 2024. A philanthropic loan totalling £810,000 enabled the purchase, repayable over a 3 year term ending June 2027. No interest is payable in respect of the loan.

20. STATEMENT OF FUNDS

	At 1 April 2023 £'000	Income £'000	Expenditure £'000	Transfers £'000	Investment gains £'000	At 31 March 2024 £'000
Unrestricted funds						
Income fund	1,368	2,942	(2,771)	660	18	2,217
Total unrestricted funds	1,368	2,942	(2,771)	660	18	2,217
Designated funds						
Nature reserves (heritage funds)	1,387	-	-	328	-	1,715
Operating freehold	994	-	(23)	(12)	-	959
Nature reserves development	16	-	-	-	-	16
Development fund	1,734	-	-	(1,234)	-	500
Innovation fund	34	-	(14)	15	-	35
Nature reserves fund	150	-	(75)	-	-	75
Somerset Environmental Records Centre	66	-	-	66	-	132
Wildlife Trusts Pension Scheme	-	-	-	500	-	500
Total designated funds	4,381	-	(112)	(337)	-	3,932
Restricted funds						
More space for nature - nature recovery	1,271	1,066	(1,043)	16	-	1,310
More space for nature - nature reserves	182	551	(271)	(339)	-	123
A movement for nature - Team Wilder	239	323	(481)	-	-	81
Telling Somerset's story - Somerset Environmental Records Centre	-	23	(23)	-	-	-
Total restricted funds	1,692	1,963	(1,818)	(323)	-	1,514
Endowment funds						
Nature reserves (heritage funds)	3,073	-	-	-	-	3,073
Total endowment funds	3,073	-	-	-	-	3,073
Total funds	10,514	4,905	(4,701)	-	18	10,736

Unrestricted funds

The unrestricted funds represent the free funds of the charity, which are not designated for a particular purpose and are maintained in accordance with the policy explained in the Trustees' report.

Designated funds

The nature reserve fund represents funds other than endowment funds that the charity has used to purchase nature reserves.

The operating freehold fund represents the value of the Trust's freehold property, comprising the main headquarters in Taunton and buildings at Honeygar.

The designated nature reserve development fund represents proceeds from the sale of land during 2016/17 which the charity has set aside specifically for re-investment in nature reserves.

The designated development fund represents funds that the charity has set aside for investment in delivering the Wilder Somerset 2030 strategy.

The innovation fund represents funds that have been set aside to support strategically important initiatives that will enhance the delivery of the Trust's programme of work.

The nature reserves fund represents funds set aside to to mitigate the reduction in agri-environment income.

The Somerset Environmental Records Centre fund represents

the cumulative surplus generated through SERC activities which has been earmarked for future investment in SERC activities.

The Wildlife Trusts Pension Scheme fund represents funds set aside should a future liability arise as a result of the contingent liability set out in note 24.

Restricted funds

The restricted income funds of the charity include restricted funds comprising the unexpended balances of donations, grants and other income, which are to be applied for specific purposes within the charity's objectives:

- ▶ **More space for nature**
 - ▶ Nature recovery – improving nature everywhere through a Nature Recovery Network.
 - ▶ Nature reserves – manage our nature reserves for conservation purposes.
- ▶ **A movement for nature** – taking action for nature's recovery across Somerset as part of Team Wilder.
- ▶ **Telling Somerset's story** – through our online State of Nature platform that informs action and monitors progress.

Nature recovery includes £292,000 (2023: £414,000) from Natural England from the Nature for Climate Peatland Grant Scheme, £15,000 (2023: £297,000) in respect of the Discovery Grant and £277,000 (2023: £117,000) in respect of the Restoration Grant.

21. TRANSFERS BETWEEN FUNDS

	Total 2024 £'000	Total 2023 £'000
Designated funds		
Nature reserves	328	-
Operating freehold reserve	(12)	(12)
Development reserve	(1,234)	(100)
Innovation fund	15	-
Somerset Environmental Records Centre	66	-
Wildlife Trusts Pension Scheme	500	-
Restricted funds		
More space for nature - nature recovery	16	(419)
More space for nature - nature reserves	(339)	(45)
A movement for nature - Team Wilder	-	5
Endowment funds		
Nature reserves	-	187
Unrestricted funds	660	384
	-	-

The designated nature reserves transfer represents land acquired in the year.

The designated operating freehold reserve transfer represents the depreciation charged in the year on the Trust's freehold property.

The designated development transfer represents the re-alignment of funds following a review of the Trust's financial reserves holding in the year.

The designated innovation fund transfer represents funds that have been set aside by the charity to support strategically important initiatives that will enhance the Trust's programme of work.

The Somerset Environmental Records Centre fund transfer represents the movement in the cumulative surplus achieved through activities which has been set aside for future investment in SERC.

The Wildlife Trusts Pension Scheme transfer represents the funds that have been set aside should a future liability arise as a result of the contingent liability set out in note 24.

The restricted fund transfer represents the transfer of assets purchased during the year through projects and grants.

22. ANALYSIS OF GROUP NET ASSETS BETWEEN FUNDS

	Unrestricted Funds £'000	Designated Funds £'000	Restricted Funds £'000	Endowment Funds £'000	Total Funds £'000
Tangible and heritage fixed assets	454	2,674	-	3,073	6,201
Investments	847	-	-	-	847
Current assets	1,393	1,258	1,514	-	4,165
Current liabilities	(477)	-	-	-	(477)
	2,217	3,932	1,514	3,073	10,736

23. SUBSIDIARY COMPANY

SWT (Sales) Limited income and expenditure statement for the year ended March 2024

	2024 £'000	2023 £'000
Turnover	592	543
Cost of sales	485	434
Gross profit	107	109
Administrative expenses	115	109
Net profit	(8)	-
Taxation	-	-
Net profit after taxation	(8)	-
Paid under gift aid to Trust	(8)	-
Retained profit carried forward	-	-
Turnover includes a charge of £39,000 (2023: £14,000) for services to the Trust. The aggregate of the assets, liabilities and funds of SWT (Sales) Limited was:		
Assets	213	198
Liabilities	(221)	(198)
Funds	(8)	-

24. CONTINGENT LIABILITIES

The Trust participated in the Wildlife Trusts Pension Scheme, a hybrid, multi-employer pension scheme which provided benefits to members on a defined benefit or defined contribution basis.

During the year ended 31 March 2022, we were made aware of a potential issue relating to the date of closure of the defined benefit section of this Scheme. A detailed investigation has been undertaken by RSWT to establish the extent to which this could result in financial liability to employers, including Somerset Wildlife Trust, who participated in that section.

Whilst that investigation is nearing completion our position is complicated by the earlier Section 75 clause in relation to our part of the Scheme - the status of which might now be disputed or uncertain. We are seeking to resolve this matter within the next 12 to 18 months and should then be able to determine what, if any, liability we may have.

The Trust has therefore not made a provision for any liability in these financial statements. The Trustees have however designated £500,000 as a precautionary measure (see note 20).

25. RECONCILIATION OF NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE) TO NET CASH INFLOW FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES

	2024 £'000	2023 £'000
Net income for the reporting period (as per the statement of financial activities)	222	732
Adjustments for:		
Depreciation charges	139	111
(Gains)/losses on investments	(18)	93
Dividends, interest and rents from investments	(132)	(61)
(Profit) on disposal of fixed assets	(2)	-
(Decrease) in provision for liabilities	(50)	(239)
(Increase) in debtors	(6)	(469)
(Decrease)/increase in creditors	(164)	25
Net cash provided by operating activities	(11)	192

26. ANALYSIS OF CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS

	2024 £'000	2023 £'000
Cash at bank and in hand	290	656
Deposit accounts (less than 3 months)	2,299	2,192
Investment cash holdings	36	17
	2,625	2,865



Grant income:
£1.7 million

27. STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

	Unrestricted Funds		Restricted	Endowment	Funds
	General £'000	Designated £'000	Funds £'000	Funds £'000	2023 £'000
Income from:					
Donations and legacies	1,011	270	746	-	2,027
Charitable activities:					
More space for nature - nature recovery	51	-	1,608	-	1,659
More space for nature - nature reserves	459	-	142	-	601
A movement for nature	-	-	330	-	330
Telling Somerset's story	141	-	17	-	158
Other trading activities (including SWT (Sales) Ltd)	600	-	-	-	600
Investments	61	-	-	-	61
Total	2,323	270	2,843	-	5,436
Expenditure on:					
Raising funds:					
Cost of raising funds	285	-	-	-	285
Membership recruitment and retention	283	-	-	-	283
Merchandising costs	1	-	-	-	1
Investment management fees	7	-	-	-	7
SWT (Sales) Ltd	589	-	-	-	589
Charitable activities:					
More space for nature - nature recovery	131	35	1,461	-	1,627
More space for nature - nature reserves	510	50	244	-	804
A movement for nature	439	-	357	-	796
Telling Somerset's story	202	-	17	-	219
Total	2,447	85	2,079	-	4,611
Net (loss) on investments	(93)	-	-	-	(93)
Net income/(expenditure)	(217)	185	764	-	732
Transfers between funds	383	(112)	(458)	187	-
Net movement in funds	166	73	306	187	732
Reconciliation of funds					
Fund balances brought forward at 1 April 2022	1,202	4,308	1,386	2,886	9,782
Fund balances carried forward at 31 March 2023	1,368	4,381	1,692	3,073	10,514

28. STATEMENT OF FUNDS 2023

	At 1 April 2022 £'000	Income £'000	Expenditure £'000	Transfers £'000	Investment Gains £'000	At 31 March 2023 £'000
Unrestricted funds						
Income fund	1,202	2,323	(2,447)	383	(93)	1,368
Total unrestricted funds	1,202	2,323	(2,447)	383	(93)	1,368
Designated funds						
Nature reserves	1,387	-	-	-	-	1,387
Operating freehold	1,006	-	-	(12)	-	994
Nature reserves development	16	-	-	-	-	16
Development reserve	1,564	270	-	(100)	-	1,734
Innovation fund	34	-	-	-	-	34
Nature reserves fund	200	-	(50)	-	-	150
Honeygar	35	-	(35)	-	-	-
Somerset Environmental Records Centre	66	-	-	-	-	66
Total designated funds	4,308	270	(85)	(112)	-	4,381
Restricted funds						
More space for nature - nature recovery	913	2,238	(1,461)	(418)	-	1,272
More space for nature - nature reserves	234	236	(244)	(45)	-	181
A movement for nature	239	352	(357)	5	-	239
Telling Somerset's story	-	17	(17)	-	-	-
Total restricted funds	1,386	2,843	(2,079)	(458)	-	1,692
Endowment funds						
Nature reserves	2,886	-	-	187	-	3,073
Total endowment funds	2,886	-	-	187	-	3,073
Total funds	9,782	5,436	(4,611)	-	(93)	10,514

29. ANALYSIS OF GROUP NET ASSETS BETWEEN FUNDS 2023

	Unrestricted Funds £'000	Designated Funds £'000	Restricted Funds £'000	Endowment Funds £'000	Total Funds £'000
Tangible and heritage fixed assets	497	2,381	-	3,073	5,951
Investments	836	-	-	-	836
Current assets	726	2,000	1,692	-	4,418
Current liabilities	(641)	-	-	-	(641)
Provisions for liabilities	(50)	-	-	-	(50)
	1,368	4,381	1,692	3,073	10,514

GIFTS AND DONATIONS

We would like to thank all our members, donors and grant givers for their generous support which is helping nature to recover across Somerset including all those who wish to remain anonymous.

Legacies

Joyce Andrews
Susan Boss
Margaret Joyce Bristow
Christopher John Cornell
Sylvia Cumper
Shirley Price Jones
Marjory Kinsley-Templar
Elizabeth Jane McDonnell
Alice McMichael
John Millington
Ursula Angela Liona Mond
Aideen Dorothy Campbell Perry

Patrons

Phillipa Archer
David and Loredana Buchan
Dudley Cheesman
John Deverell CBE
Charles Fattorini
James and Alka Hughes- Hallett
Stanley and Jennifer Johnson
Anne Jones
Jean Mantle
Rohan and Lily Masson-Taylor
Lesley O'Mara
Mark O'Neill
Nigel and Janet Phillips
John Poingdestre
Gill Rickards and Simon Hart
Laura Roberts
Janet Robinson and Paul Groom
Tim and Dede Sanderson
Paul Sheppard and Lucy Dunford
Paul and Mona Sinclair
Lucy Starling
Clive Taylor
Jane Taylor
Chris and Maria Thring
Patrick Thomson
Robert Unwin

Sarah Warren
Neil and Sarah Williams
Giles Woodward

Corporate members and partners

A C Mole
Habitat Aid Ltd
Melhuish and Saunders Ltd

Grants and Trusts

AJH Ashby Wills Trust + HSBC
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BizGive
Blair Foundation
CAF - America
Charitable Trust
Clark Foundation
Defra FiPL funding
Defra #Species Survival Fund
Devon Wildlife Trust
D'Oyly Carte Charitable Trust
Ecological Restoration Fund
Elmgrant Charitable Trust
Environment Agency
Ernest Cook
Ewing and Haines Charitable Trust
The Fairfield Charitable Trust
Foxglove Charitable Trust
Garfield Weston Foundation
Glastonbury Town Fund
Golden Bottle Trust
Groundworks
Hamamelis Charitable Trust
Highways England / RSWT
Hinkley Community Fund
John Swire 1989 Charitable Trust
Joseph Strong Frazer Trust
Keith Showering Charitable Trust
Leonard Laity Stoate

Linmardon Trust
Ludlow Trust
MacRobert Trust
Mendip Hills AONB
Natural England
National Lottery Heritage Fund
Ninesquare Trust
Norman Smith Charitable Oliver Morland
Roger and Sarah Bancroft Clark
RSWT Precious Peatland Settlement
Settlement 1965
ShareGift
Smith Charitable Trust
Somerset Community Foundation
Spar Community Awards
Steel Charitable Trust
The Stephen Clark Charitable
Tesco Stores
Trust company (UK) Ltd Verdon-Valencia Community Fund
Wessex Water
Wild Flower Society

We would like to acknowledge all donations made in memory of Heather Corrie.



KEY PEOPLE AND ADVISERS

Key people

Patron

Simon King OBE

President

Stephen Moss

Vice-Presidents

Dudley Cheesman

Roger Martin

Chris Sperring MBE

Directors and Trustees

The directors of the charitable company (“the Trust”) are its Trustees for the purpose of charity law. The Trustees on the date of approval of this report, all of whom were members for the whole of the financial year in question unless stated otherwise, were as follows:

Chair

Graeme Mitchell

(resigned 18 November 2023)

Rupert Taylor

(appointed 18 November 2023)

Vice-Chair

Matthew Bell

(resigned 4 March 2024)

Tina Trickett

(appointed 12 March 2024)

Treasurer

Richard Atkin

(resigned 1 August 2023)

Stephen Rogers

(appointed 1 August 2023)

Elected Trustees

Richard Atkin

(resigned 1 August 2023)

Matthew Bell

Amy Coulthard

Edward Green

Philip Holms

Stuart McBride

Graeme Mitchell

(resigned 18 November 2023)

Holly Purdey

Stephen Rogers

(appointed 1 August 2023)

Dr Richard Scarlett

Dr Daniel Skinner

Dr Mark Steer

Rupert Taylor

(appointed 18 November 2023)

Tina Trickett

Somerset Wildlife Trust is a registered charity.

Charity number 238372.

Company number 818162.

Registered office: 34

Wellington Road, Taunton,

Somerset TA1 5AW

SWT (Sales) Ltd Directors

Malcolm Hutton

Stuart McBride

Damien Reid

Peter Solly

Georgia Dent

Tina Trickett

(appointed 4 June 2024)

Patrick Vandestein

Senior Leadership Team

Katie Arber,

Director of Fundraising and Marketing/Deputy Chief Executive Officer

(resigned 14 July 2023)

Simon Clarke,

Head of Nature Recovery

Georgia Dent,

Chief Executive Officer

Kirby Everett,

Head of Marketing and Communications

Rachael Fickweiler,

Head of Nature Reserves and Land Management

James Grischeff,

Director of Nature

Recovery *(appointed 19 February 2024)*

Helun Jones,

Head of People, Culture and Resources

Sophie Laurie,

Head of Innovation and Evidence *(appointed*

5 February 2024)

Kate Matravers-Cox,

Head of Finance

Adam Murray,

Director of Action for

Nature *(appointed*

4 December 2023)

Paul Smith,

Director of Business

Planning and Development

(appointed 16 April 2024)

Rebecca Walford,

Interim Head of

Fundraising

(appointed 3 July 23,

resigned 31 March 24)

Head of Fundraising

(appointed 1 April 2024)

Mark Ward,

Interim Head of

Engagement *(appointed*

16 October 2023,

resigned 31 March 2024)

Scott West,

Director of Commercial

and Nature-based

Solutions

(resigned 9 October 2023)

Advisers

Senior Statutory Auditor

Michelle Ferris, Albert

Goodman, Goodwood

House, Blackbrook

Park Avenue, Taunton,

Somerset, TA1 2PX

Bankers

Lloyds Bank, 31 Fore

Street, Taunton, Somerset

TA1 1HN

CCLA Investment

Management Limited,

One Angel Lane,

London, EC4R 3AB

Solicitors

Clarke Willmott,

Blackbrook Gate,

Blackbrook Park Avenue,

Taunton, Somerset

TA1 2PG

Investment Managers

Rathbones Investment

Management Limited,

10 Queen Square, Bristol,

BS1 4NT

Land Agents

Greenslade Taylor Hunt,

1 High Street, Chard,

Somerset



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(common blue), p56 (hedgehog), p56 (fly agaric),
p60 (kingfisher), p71,

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p4-5, p15, p54-55, **Amy Lewis**

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