



# Gloucestershire

## Wildlife Trust

2020 – 2021

**IMPACT REPORT**



# Introduction

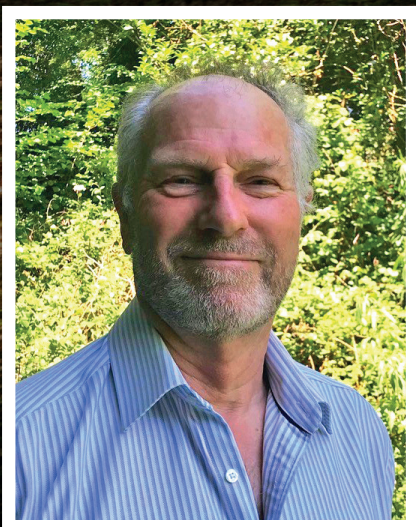
Welcome to our Impact Report for 2020-21. As well as summarising the major achievements and challenges of the year, 2021 is our 60th anniversary, so this year's report also includes a look back at our history and a look forward to 2030. The next 10 years are a critical opportunity to reverse declines in wildlife, and we would love your feedback on our draft plans.

This has been the most challenging of years. Our members, volunteers and supporters enabled another year of achievement for the Trust despite the significant impact of the COVID-19 emergency, which was felt throughout the year. The pandemic hit us hard.

Despite COVID-19, in 2020 we were still able to deliver many of our plans. We completed the first year trial of the new national Environmental Land Management scheme and continued the work of the ERDF Wild Towns project - creating, connecting and enhancing green spaces in seven towns across Gloucestershire. We implemented our Estate Review and completed the new visitor facilities, café and refurbished HQ at Robinswood Hill in Gloucester. I would like to thank the staff and my fellow Trustees for their hard work and dedication during a difficult year, and our supporters for their loyalty.

We continued to work through the year, often remotely rather than in person, with conservation partners, communities, public bodies and corporate partners. In particular, we remain very grateful for the continued support of Grundon Waste Management for so many of our projects through the Landfill Communities Fund.

The global pandemic is the third emergency we had to tackle in 2020. Hopefully, the impact of COVID-19 will lessen over the next year or two. However, the continuing and interlinked challenges of saving the county's wildlife and reducing the harmful impacts of climate change will be with us for much longer. We need nature and are part of nature. It is in all of our interests to halt and reverse declines in wildlife and the job of us here at the Wildlife Trust to lead on nature's recovery in Gloucestershire, fostering the connection of people to wildlife and wild spaces.



A stylized, handwritten signature in white ink that reads "Bullock".

**David Bullock**  
Chair of Trustees





**“ The global pandemic is the third emergency we had to tackle in 2020. Hopefully, the impact of COVID-19 will lessen over the next year or two. However, the continuing and interlinked challenges of saving the county’s wildlife and reducing the harmful impacts of climate change will be with us for much longer. ”**



# Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust

## 60 years



Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust was founded in 1961 by a group of passionate volunteers, including Sir Peter Scott, who recognised that local wildlife was under threat.

Since that first meeting, 60 years ago, the Trust has grown from strength to strength and now has over 450 active volunteers and over 27,000 members.

This year, we're looking back over the last six decades and our work towards a wilder Gloucestershire – more wildlife, more wild places and more people connected to the natural world.

**1961**



In 1961 the natural wealth of wildlife had been badly affected by post-war farming and the building of new housing and transport links. Gloucestershire's characteristic pre-war species such as the otter were facing local extinction.

**GWT begins to recruit its first volunteers.**

**1999**



**Large blue butterfly reintroduction begins at Daneway Banks.**

This once-extinct butterfly is reintroduced to Daneway Banks over the next decade, resulting in the largest known population of large blue butterflies in the world recorded here in 2019!

**1997**



**HRH The Prince of Wales opens Lower Woods nature reserve.**

One of the largest ancient woodlands in the south west of England, it comprises 23 separate woods whose boundaries have remained unchanged for centuries.

**1962**



**We acquire our first ever nature reserve - Badgeworth Pool.**

At the time it was England's smallest reserve at 290m<sup>2</sup> and was the only known UK location for the adder's-tongue spearwort – otherwise known as the Badgeworth Buttercup.

**1976**

**GWT's Schools Nature Quiz established by the Trust's Engagement and Learning volunteers.**

**1992**



**Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust's name becomes official in this year, previously we'd been known as The Gloucestershire Trust for Nature Conservation.**

**1985**



**Coombe Hill becomes a GWT nature reserve.**

Coombe Hill Canal, which is 3.75km long, is purchased by the Trust from the liquidators of the Severn & Canal Carrying Company.





**2013**

**Urban engagement**

We begin to focus on engaging with the urban communities around Robinswood Hill, launching the project All Paths Lead to the Hill.



**2019**

**Pine martens return to Gloucestershire.**

Following two years of feasibility studies investigating the reintroduction of pine martens in Gloucestershire, 18 pine martens are translocated from the Scottish Highlands and released into the Forest of Dean. Scat surveys and sightings in 2021 confirm that the reintroduced pine martens and their kits are establishing territories, as hoped, and spreading into neighbouring counties.

**2014**

**Brighter Futures**

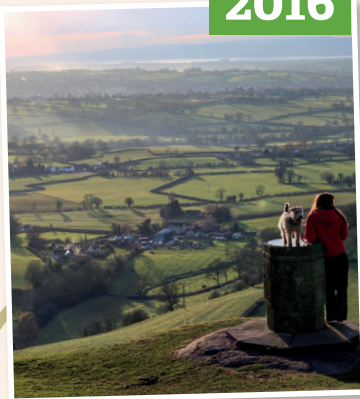
GWT starts its Brighter Futures courses, supporting local people to improve green spaces, learn new skills, develop their existing ones and increasing their chances of finding paid work.



**2016**

**Transfer of Gloucestershire County Council sites to the Trust.**

Gloucestershire County Council transfer their Countryside Sites to GWT. The Trust becomes the new guardian of Crickley Hill, Barrow Wake, Coopers Hill, Kilkenny and Coaley Peak.



**2018**

**Building with Nature** is created, developed by GWT, as a new benchmark for the design and maintenance of green infrastructure in housing and commercial development.

**2017**

**Conservation grazing in the Forest of Dean begins.**

The first year of this conservation grazing project, working towards landscape-scale habitat enhancement.





# How we've done against our plans

In spite of the challenges thrown up by the pandemic and the impact on our work, we managed to achieve many of our objectives for 2020 - 2021.

## Wildlife & Wild Places

### ERDF Wild Towns

Much of the work of the ERDF (European Regional Development Fund) Wild Towns project was able to continue safely during the lockdowns, albeit with some delays. The project aims to create, connect and enhance green spaces for wildlife in seven towns across Gloucestershire. Work has included willow pollarding for water voles in Fairford, stream restoration in Tetbury, hedge planting in Moreton-in-Marsh, orchard restoration in Stroud and Stonehouse, conservation grazing and river work in Cinderford and meadow creation and access infrastructure in Cirencester.



### Completion of the More Hooves for Horseshoes project

We completed the delivery of the More Hooves for Horseshoes project in the Forest of Dean to benefit local horseshoe bat populations. Work included installing fencing, creating livestock handling facilities, management of invasive species and the purchase of native breed sheep for conservation grazing. The project also included coppicing and thinning of woodland edges to improve foraging habitat and flight paths for bats, together with improvements to bat roosting habitat.

### Ash dieback works

Ash dieback is a fungal disease of ash trees which is affecting woodlands throughout the UK. Dead and dying ash trees pose a health and safety risk and we have therefore enhanced our annual tree safety inspections on all GWT nature reserves. A large-scale felling programme has been delivered on all high-risk areas adjacent to properties, car parks and highways throughout the GWT estate. This has involved extensive felling on reserves including Lower Woods, Crickley Hill, Barrow Wake, Daneway Banks, Sapperton Valley, Siccarridge Wood and Coopers Hill.

### Estate Review

We started to implement the recommendations of the detailed review of all the land that we own or manage. The review was based on the principles of the 2011 Lawton Review - recognising that the Trust's land management work needs to deliver bigger, better and more joined up places for wildlife. We have now withdrawn from all non-owned sites with a low ecological score and worked on legacy plans for nine owned sites which had low ecological scores. Alongside this work we have begun the process of developing visions and aims for our Priority Landscape Areas, aligned with the Nature Recovery Network.

## Inspiring Communities

### Return to the Hill project

The Return to the Hill project is finally underway after the start was sadly delayed last year due to COVID-19. We were able to recruit a new project officer during lockdown, who concentrated on elements of the project that do not require face-to-face engagement - this included the planning of events, project officer training and the creation of a launch video. This project will celebrate the story of Robinswood Hill, improve accessibility and celebrate cultural diversity. We have already started to see a positive effect that this work is having on local communities interacting with the Hill.

### Online learning

COVID-19 prompted us to revisit our delivery model for learning. With face-to-face learning challenged by restrictions, we created a series of online formal learning sessions for primary and secondary schools. We also put informal learning activities online and engaged with more than 20,000 people in this way.

### Cheltenham Drop-in Garden project

We completed the Cheltenham Drop-in Garden project which took a neglected, under-used piece of land in central Cheltenham and involved local communities to create a haven for people and wildlife. When restrictions permitted, the garden provided leisure and training opportunities for those wishing to learn wildlife-friendly gardening skills. It is now a valuable space for the local community and wildlife.





# Natural Solutions

## Natural Flood Management

Our long-term programme of watercourse improvements have been able to continue. Natural Flood Management measures have been implemented on the River Twyver including the installation of 'leaky dams' to slow the flow of water and reduce the impacts of flooding further downstream. We also worked with partners to create functional healthy watercourses for people and wildlife in urban areas by establishing two demonstration rain gardens in Gloucester, to help reduce the risk of flooding while also attracting pollinating insects.

## Environmental Land Management trial

We completed the first year of working with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on a trial to inform a new national Environmental Land Management scheme, leading a partnership of five Wildlife Trusts engaging farmers to see how the new scheme can create more space for nature in Gloucestershire's farmland.



## Building with Nature

The Building with Nature framework for green infrastructure standards continued to grow across the county, supporting new housing, infrastructure and commercial developments to meet the evidence-based standards for wildlife, water and wellbeing developed by GWT. We increased our work with local planning authorities in the county, encouraging them to adopt the standards in policy documents and encourage key developments to seek accreditation. Wild Service, our ecological consultancy, worked with Cirencester College to advise on improvements to the college and its grounds.

# Extending Our Reach

## Robinswood Hill visitor facilities and HQ

After delays caused by the pandemic, the building works at Robinswood Hill were completed in summer 2020. This included visitor facilities, café and a community hub, as well as a refurbished HQ for GWT staff and volunteers. Sustainability was an important consideration in the design of the buildings, with improved insulation, natural ventilation, external cladding from GWT nature reserves and a sustainable drainage system collecting rainwater and directing it into rain gardens.



## Young Ambassadors Board

We created a Young Ambassadors Board to support and shape the delivery of our strategy and to enhance young people's representation at GWT led by our young trustee, Rosemary McCloskey. Interviews took place and eight young people accepted the offer of a role on the Young Ambassadors Board for 2021-22.

## Increasing our online presence

In response to COVID-19 we expanded our online presence. With enhanced digital content, we saw a significant increase in visits to the website and followers of our social media channels. We engaged with many new audiences and had an increase in online membership sign-ups. We also ran our first online appeal, directing all donations to be given through the Big Give online giving platform with fantastic results thanks to those who supported us.





# Road to 2030

The background of the entire page is a light blue sky with several white birds in flight. Below the sky, there are green silhouettes of trees and rolling hills. In the foreground, there are dark green silhouettes of people: one person on the left looking up, and two people on the right planting a small tree.

As well as celebrating all that GWT has achieved over 60 years, we need to **look forward**. The next 10 years are critical if we want to secure nature's recovery in Gloucestershire.

Now we're setting a new strategy to take us to 2030 and **we want to hear your views**

## A people powered nature recovery

We are in a climate and ecological emergency, but there is hope. Wildlife declines can be reversed, and nature-based solutions can help to tackle the challenges of climate change.

There is no denying that Gloucestershire and the UK's wildlife is in serious trouble. Each generation is passing on significantly less wildlife than they inherited.

In Gloucestershire we've already lost

- 96% of Cotswolds wildflower-rich grasslands
- 70% of traditional orchards
- Internationally important wetlands in the Severn Vale.

We need to stop and reverse the declines, and put nature in recovery – at scale and at pace.

We cannot do this alone.

We need local communities who, with our support, are empowered to become the agents of change. The recovery of nature must be inclusive, welcoming and diverse, driven by Gloucestershire's people and communities.

## What could a people powered nature recovery look like?

- Wilder woodlands, wetlands and grasslands could help reach carbon net zero targets and reduce pollution.
- Nature-based solutions could make our communities and businesses more resilient to flooding and water shortages.
- Replenishing and protecting our soils could reduce pollution, improve food security and secure a sustainable future for our farmers.
- COVID-19 has demonstrated just how important access to nature is for wellbeing. New green infrastructure and nature on prescription could build healthier communities.



## A new approach

Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust has saved many special places and species, yet Gloucestershire's wildlife continues to decline. We can protect our nature reserves, but these cover less than 1% of the county and this will never be enough. The Trust is committed to putting nature into recovery by 2030 and this means business as usual is not an option.

Our new strategy needs to respond to the ecological emergency and support others to do the same. To achieve this, we are proposing to transform the way we work in four ways.

### ➤ **Move from protection to recovery**

Protecting our remaining wildlife hotspots is important but not enough. We will create and connect new wildlife-rich habitats, steered by the Nature Recovery Network.

### ➤ **Supporting wildlife to adapt to climate change**

Climate change is one of the biggest threats to wildlife. Wherever possible we must support species to adapt and take bold action to future-proof our ecosystems.

### ➤ **More people acting for wildlife**

Not enough people take action for wildlife. We will support people from all backgrounds to contribute to nature's recovery.

### ➤ **Working in partnership**

We will do everything we can to deliver real change on the ground in partnership with local landowners, farmers, businesses, schools, local authorities and other environmental organisations. We will be a strong voice pushing for and enabling change at a local level and at a national level through The Wildlife Trusts network.



# Our goals to 2030

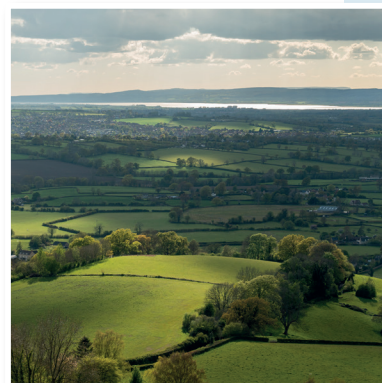


Our three draft goals represent what we want to achieve by 2030. **We'd love to know what you think about them.**

## 1. We want more, bigger, better and joined-up places where wildlife is abundant.

This means shifting our focus to deliver at scale beyond our own estate with partners, farmers and landowners – and increasing the quality of land we manage. We will be led by the Nature Recovery Network and our Priority Landscape Areas that it identifies for nature's recovery.

**Our target is 30% of land in Gloucestershire is managed for wildlife by 2030.**



## 2. People are taking action to reverse wildlife declines.

We want to reach more people, change behaviour and challenge our models for engagement. We will work in partnership, inspire others to lead and launch a programme of citizen action. To do this we will connect more people to nature and encourage them to support our work.

**Our target is 1 in 4 people taking action for nature's recovery by 2030.**



## 3. Natural solutions are tackling the climate crisis.

We want to promote and deliver solutions to the biodiversity and climate emergencies in work across the organisation, from our advocacy, to the delivery of green infrastructure, and from our mapping, to engaging communities.

**Our target is a 10% increase in the nature-based benefits that land in Gloucestershire provides to local people by 2030.**





## Let us know what you think

We want to finalise our plans for a people powered nature recovery by the Annual General Meeting in November. But first we want to know what you think.

We are asking members to answer three questions to help us with our new strategy. Please let us know your thoughts.

1. What needs to change to deliver nature's recovery?
2. What is the most important role that GWT can play and what could we do better?
3. What would help you and your community to support nature's recovery?

You can let us know your answers and thoughts at:

**[www.gloucestershirewildlifetrust.co.uk/memberfeedback](http://www.gloucestershirewildlifetrust.co.uk/memberfeedback)**



To go straight to the survey hold the camera from your smartphone or tablet over this **QR code**.

or

Send your responses to:

**Roger Mortlock at Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, Robinswood Hill Country Park, Reservoir Road, Gloucester, GL4 6SX**





# Our plans for 2021/22

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## Celebrating GWT's 60th Anniversary

In November we'll celebrate the Trust's 60th Anniversary. There will be various 60th anniversary related activities taking place during the year culminating at the AGM on the 6 November.

## Wild Trainees

We will deliver the Wild Trainees project which aims to create the first environmental vocational training scheme in Gloucestershire for 18-25-year-olds, developing the skills and knowledge needed to work in a variety of land management roles.



## Community empowerment

We will be exploring new routes to engagement, putting the skills, knowledge and power in the hands of the people and encouraging others to take action for nature. Through the creation of a toolkit, we'll empower at least three communities to take action for wildlife by March 2022.

## Severn Wildbelt

We're working with partners to develop a vision for a Severn Wildbelt. The concept of a 'Wildbelt' has been promoted by The Wildlife Trusts with Government support as a new designation to bolster nature's recovery. It will utilise land that is currently of low biodiversity value, help join up high value areas, and so speed the creation of the Nature Recovery Network.

## Rebuilding Landscapes for Nature's Recovery in Gloucestershire

The delivery of the Rebuilding Landscapes for Nature's Recovery in Gloucestershire project will continue, secured through the Green Recovery Challenge Fund. The project includes work on nationally threatened species in our first Priority Landscape Area in the Golden Valley between Stroud and Cirencester, and in the Forest of Dean.





# Thanks to you

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Despite huge disruptions at Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust over the past year, our brilliant volunteers rose to the challenges posed by COVID-19, with many continuing to offer what support they could whilst adhering to government guidelines – sometimes in new ways. Many stepped forward to help with essential site safety or livestock checks, while others found ways to support GWT at home. We couldn't have weathered this storm without our volunteers, and as restrictions finally begin to ease, we are looking forward to welcoming back the people who make our work possible.

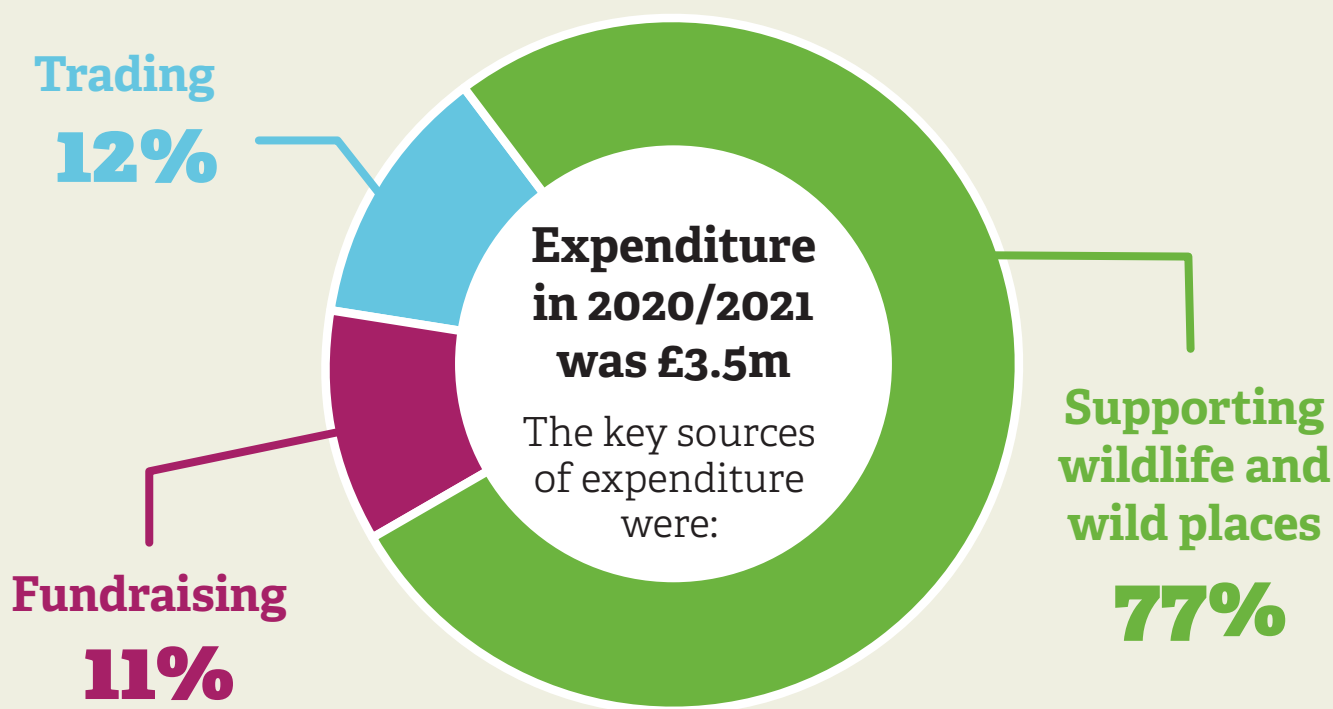
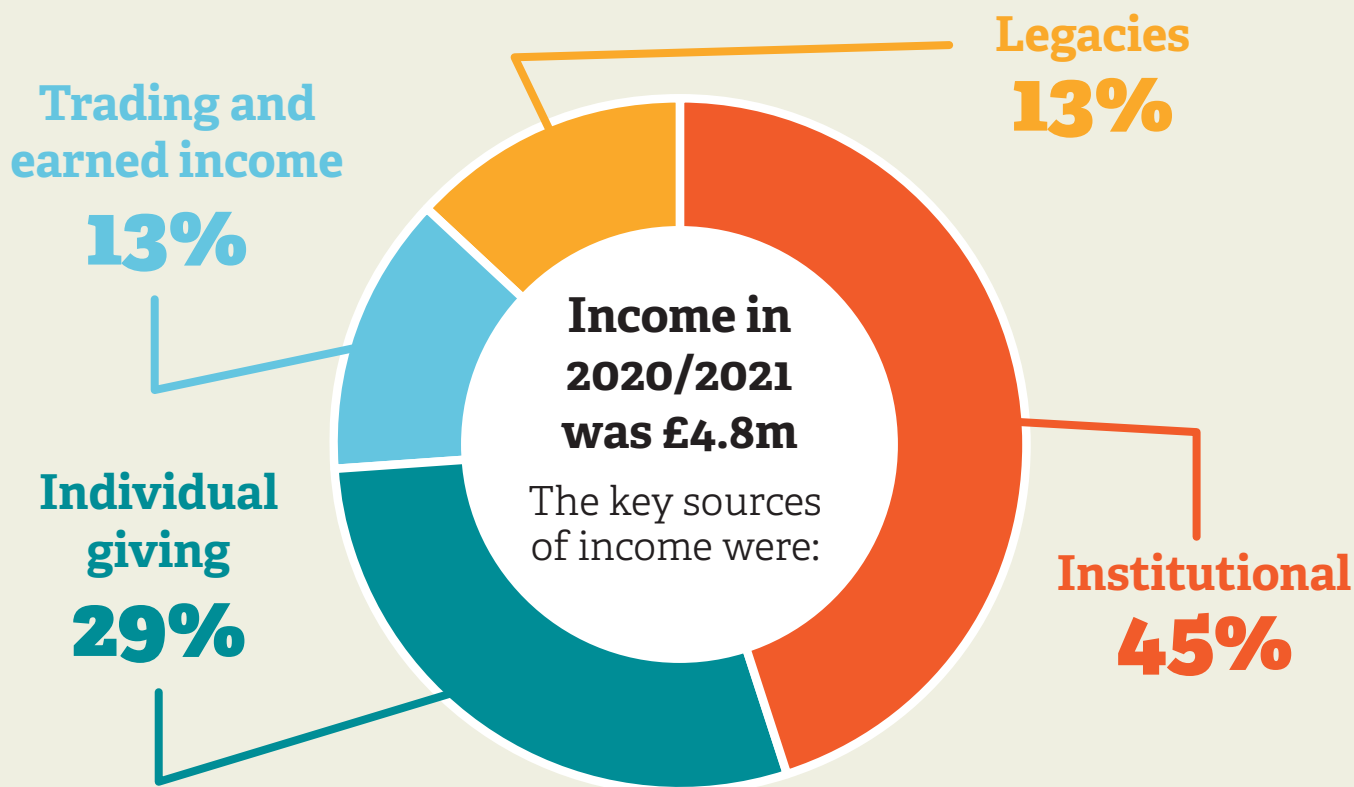
Lastly, as ever, we want to say thank you to you, our members, individual supporters and corporate and institutional partners. **We know that only with your support can we achieve our vision for Gloucestershire – a county where each year there is more wildlife, there are more wild places and more people are closer to nature.**





# Financial Statement

This year you have helped us protect more wildlife and wild places, and connect more people with nature.



Our full Annual Report and Accounts are published on our website. Find them in the About us section, under Governance, or call us for a copy.



# Thank you

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## **CORPORATE SUPPORT**

Cotswold Outdoor  
Ecclesiastical Insurance Group  
Forest Holidays  
KW Financial Services  
Sudeley Castle & Gardens  
Vine House Farm

## **LANDFILL COMMUNITIES FUND**

Biffa Award  
Enovert Community Trust  
Grundon Waste Management  
Ibstock Enovert Trust  
Viridor Credits Environmental Company

## **GRANTS**

Cotswold District Council  
DEFRA  
Environment Agency  
European Regional Development Fund  
Forestry England  
Gloucester City Council  
Gloucestershire County Council  
Gloucestershire Gateway Trust  
Natural England  
Network Rail  
Podsmead Big Local  
Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts  
Severn Rivers Trust  
Severn Trent Water Ltd  
The Big Give Trust  
The National Lottery Community Fund  
The National Lottery Heritage Fund  
Thirty Percy Foundation  
Woodland Trust

## **CHARITABLE TRUSTS**

Alice Noakes Memorial Charitable Trust  
Banister Charitable Trust  
Esmée Fairbairn Foundation  
Garfield Weston Foundation  
The Gordon Gray Trust  
J & M Britton Charitable Trust  
MV Hillhouse Trust  
Nichola Odey Charitable Trust  
The Ernest Cook Trust  
The Langtree Trust  
The Verdon-Smith Family Charitable Trust  
The Yarrow Trust

## **PARTNERSHIPS**

Countryside and Community Research Institute  
Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership  
Vincent Wildlife Trust

## **ADDITIONAL THANKS**

Beckford Women's Institute  
Forest of Dean Area Group  
NHS Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group  
Gloucestershire Naturalists' Society  
Hawkesbury Parish Council  
Helford River Group  
Mukasa Leonard Stanley Safari Supper Group  
Pates School  
Wildlife Guardians and Patrons  
All of our dedicated volunteers







# Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust

**To find out more and get involved please contact us.**

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**W:** [www.gloucestershiREWildlifeTrust.co.uk](http://www.gloucestershiREWildlifeTrust.co.uk)

For regular updates about our work sign up for our regular e-newsletter by visiting **[gloucestershiREWildlifeTrust.co.uk/enews](http://gloucestershiREWildlifeTrust.co.uk/enews)**

Keep up to date with our work on social media by following **@gloswildlife** on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.



Registered Charity Number: 232580

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