



Gloucestershire
Wildlife Trust

Impact Report

2022/2023

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Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust Registered Charity Number 232580

Welcome to Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust's Impact Report for 2022/23



This year's report comes at a time of change and opportunity for GWT, as we reflect on the achievements made during the first year of our ambitious 2030 strategy, but also

bid a fond farewell to our CEO Roger Mortlock. After a decade of dedication to Gloucestershire's wildlife, Roger has moved on to pastures new to take on a new role at CPRE, the countryside charity. During Roger's time as CEO, he guided us through all things, big and small. From protecting wildlife on our nature reserves, to working with our neighbours, local authorities, other Trusts and private landowners, Roger's leadership and vision for GWT has been essential. As we embark on the next phase of our strategy, we'll be taking this vision with us and wish Roger all the best for the future.

Thanks as always are due to our wonderful members, volunteers and supporters, who provide the foundation for the work we do for wildlife here in Gloucestershire. Staff across the organisation have been working with focus to begin the delivery of our 2030 strategy, and this report provides an update on the progress made so far across the three themes: stopping and reversing wildlife declines, more people taking action for nature and normalising natural solutions to climate change.

Highlights from this year are many, including the completion of the EDRF Wild Towns project, the largest single project GWT have delivered to date. The project has delivered more than 50 hectares of urban and peri-urban green infrastructure across seven market towns in Gloucestershire. We've launched an innovative new project with the Hasfield Court Estate and begun defining individual strategies for our Nature Recovery Zones, which will guide our work over the coming years.

On the people side of our work, great progress has been made encouraging people to take action for nature. Our Nextdoor Nature project has been inspiring people in urban areas of Cheltenham,

Gloucester and the Forest of Dean to connect with nature on their doorstep. Internally, a new Visitor Engagement Manager role has been created, to ensure we provide an accessible and inspiring path to nature for different audiences at our gateway sites: Robinswood Hill, Crickley Hill and Greystones Farm.

To ensure natural solutions are at the heart of our work to tackle climate change here in Gloucestershire, we've launched two large partnership projects. Severn Treescapes will work across Gloucestershire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire to create a 60 mile corridor of enhanced tree cover, whilst our Eelscapes team, in partnership with the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust and the Environment Agency, will carry out the first, developmental stage of a visionary project aimed at restoring naturally functioning floodplain wetlands.

We will achieve little unless we work in partnership with land and water managers and stakeholders at every level, within and beyond Gloucestershire. Over the last twelve months we have experienced the change we had been striving for when it comes to this way of working, partnering with neighbouring Wildlife Trusts, Local Authorities, Statutory Agencies and many more valued partners and stakeholders, to bring our work here in Gloucestershire to scale. We will continue this partnership approach over the next twelve months and beyond, as it forms a vital part of reaching the ambitious goals set for us and our county in the 2030 Strategy.

As we move into GWT's next chapter the support of our members, individual supporters, corporate supporters and partner organisations remains as vital as ever. We hope that you will be inspired by the progress made this year and our plans for the future and will continue to walk with us on our path to nature's recovery.

David Bullock
Chair of Trustees



BEN HALL/2020VISION

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A Year in Review

Spring

In April, and after much effort from teams across the organisation, our new Nature Reserve Guide was published. It gives an engaging overview of each of our nature reserves, with maps and walks, information about their history, beautiful images, and what species to spot. This user-friendly guide covers the importance of these wild places and how they link together to create a bigger, better and more joined up county for nature to thrive, making it easier for people to visit these special places, but just as importantly making it easier for visitors to take responsibility for caring for them.

In May we were delighted to learn that Lower Woods had been chosen as part of the Queen's Green Canopy, a nationwide network of ancient woodlands or trees dedicated in celebration of the Platinum Jubilee.

Autumn

In October we held a vibrant Autumn festival at Robinswood Hill. This large scale engagement activity coincided with the completion of the hugely successful Return to the Hill project. Over 500 people attended, with budding nature enthusiasts planting 100 trees to get the Severn Treescapes nursery off to a flying start.

Tree planting continued into November with the official launch of Severn Treescapes. Local school children got involved by planting a traditional variety of perry pear for each of the three counties of Gloucestershire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire, amongst other native species.

Summer

In June we unveiled our newest nature reserve, Trillis Banks. We were thrilled to secure the long-term future of this high-quality area of grassland very close to other nature reserves in the Golden Valley, linking together habitats and enhancing this network for the benefit of local wildlife.

Our Estate Review was implemented throughout the year and in July we were delighted to transfer Frome Banks to the Stroud Valleys Project, knowing that this urban reserve will be in very capable hands.

In the summer we received confirmation that the grassland at Daneway Banks was officially home to the largest population of large blue butterflies anywhere in the world, an incredible achievement and a true

reintroduction success story. The species is now expanding naturally, a process aided by our acquisition of nearby Trillis Banks.

The nine Wildlife Trusts covering the full catchment areas of the Rivers Wye and Severn established a partnership in order to deliver greater impact for nature. This will increase our effectiveness at creating and delivering landscape-scale improvements which make a significant difference in tackling the biodiversity crisis. It will also strengthen our voice, so we can engage more effectively with the public and decision-makers, thereby achieving greater impact for nature across national and county boundaries.



NATHAN MILLAR

BILLY HEANEY

Winter

In December we welcomed the Global Biodiversity Framework with negotiators at COP15 agreeing an historic global deal to protect nature. We were pleased to see the target of protecting 30% of land and sea for nature enshrined in international law, linking with our local ambitions to see 30% of land in Gloucestershire managed for wildlife by 2030.

A successful recruitment programme significantly increased the number of volunteers contributing to our pine marten project. Volunteers have been tracking pine marten movements since the first batch of martens arrived but as radio-collars are designed to fall off after a year, we need alternative methods to continue the monitoring. Volunteers will now be monitoring camera traps and undertaking scat surveys.

We embarked on a new project to transform undeveloped land along the River Severn into a thriving nature park. Working with partners, we will be turning this vast swathe of land into a range of new accessible habitats, including wetland, woodland and meadows.



NICK TURNER

NICK TURNER

How we've done against our plans

1 Stopping and reversing wildlife declines

Expand our nature reserves
We are aiming to strategically expand our nature reserves to a total of 1,700 hectares by 2030.

This year, we acquired Simpson's Meadow, part of a Local Wildlife Site in Tidenham Parish in the Forest of Dean. This wildflower-rich grassland has multiple records of nationally threatened species and was generously gifted to the Trust by long-term supporters. It's adjacent to The Park nature reserve and Poor's Allotment and the acquisition is an important step forward in our ambition to link together habitats on a larger scale, providing connectivity for wildlife to move through the landscape as part of the Lower Wye and Tidenham Chase Nature Recovery Zone.

Deliver 30% by 2030
By 2030 we want 30% of all land in the county to be managed for wildlife.

Our Nature Recovery Zones (NRZs), GWT's response to the Lawton Report, will form an essential part of achieving this target. NRZs are based around our biggest and best nature reserves and guided by Gloucestershire's Nature Recovery Network, a data-based map that shows us where creating and enhancing habitat will have the greatest impact. We've identified ten NRZs across the county and have been working this year on defining a tailored strategy for each NRZ, produced in collaboration with local stakeholders. These strategies ensure each NRZ has a defined vision and provide a focus for future projects and land management in each respective area.

To protect and expand nature rich habitats we need to understand where existing elements of this habitat already exist. Our HabiMap UK Habitat Classification volunteer survey programme is now into its third year and is being used as an exemplar across The Wildlife Trusts. During 2022 HabiMap trained more than 80 volunteers who have gone on to survey over 1,000 parcels of habitat over the last year. All of this data has been incorporated into our countywide habitat mapping, which informs the Nature Recovery Network on which we base our work towards nature's recovery.

Doorstep to landscape
By 2030, we want to create or improve 300 hectares for people, wildlife and climate.

This year saw the completion of our ERDF Wild Towns project, which created, connected and enhanced green spaces in Cirencester, Fairford, Tetbury, Moreton-in-Marsh, Cinderford, Stroud and Stoneshouse. Work carried out this year included wetland works at Stratford Park in Stroud and meadow creation at the Abbey Grounds in Cirencester.

We delivered the Barton Street Nature Highway project in Gloucester, which worked with a wide range of local stakeholders, including local people, community groups and social prescribers. As part of the project we refreshed existing green infrastructure, created a network of planters and commissioned a large and eye-catching nature mural.

Creation of the People's Nature Reserve is underway. The idea behind this project is to empower people to take action to enhance and manage land for wildlife where they live. Activities carried out by participants totalling more than nine hectares have been reported via our citizen action platform, WilderGlos.

2 More people taking action for nature

Be bold champions for wildlife
We want key decisions to put nature first, with 4,000 citizens empowered to influence decision-makers.

We took part in the Defend Nature campaign alongside other Wildlife Trusts and environmental NGOs. The campaign grew in response to the unprecedented series of attacks on nature by the UK government and concerns that they were not on track to meet the targets set out in the 25 year Environment Plan. We provided a range of resources for local people to allow them to find out more and encourage them to write to their MPs. We also wrote directly to all six Gloucestershire MPs and managed to engage four of them in ongoing conversations.

Build a movement
We want to mobilise 15,000 people and support 100 communities in the county to take meaningful actions to reverse wildlife declines.

We have been delivering the Nextdoor Nature programme here in Gloucestershire, an incredible community organizing project that's being carried out at Wildlife Trusts across the country.

The programme aims to inspire and empower people from economically deprived communities to take action to bring nature into the heart of their community. We've been working with a wide range of communities in Cheltenham, Gloucester and the Forest of Dean, helping to plant community gardens, supporting vulnerable adults to develop a garden they can be proud of and hosting a range of community events.

Nature for all
We want to make nature inclusive by reaching 1 in 4 people in Gloucestershire

We've invested in a key new role to focus on developing our important Gateway Sites (Crickley Hill, Robinswood Hill and Greystones Farm). Our Visitor Engagement Manager is responsible for enhancing our engagement with multiple varied audiences, including those who are new to nature. They are working particularly closely with café staff, the Learning team and events, to ensure a positive, engaging and inspirational experience for all visitors.

We relaunched our learning offer, aiming to encourage more and more children to engage with nature from an early age. A whopping 1616 children have attended reserve-based learning over the past year, including 704 children engaged directly through school visits to our Gateway sites. 355 budding nature enthusiasts took part in the School's Quiz and over 1,000 young people were engaged at Robinswood Hill. The Learning team continue to ensure we're inspiring the next generation of nature lovers here in Gloucestershire.

We completed our Return to the Hill project, which engaged over 8,000 visitors to learn more about the natural and man-made heritage of Robinswood Hill. As part of this project we improved access and ensured we created opportunities for a diverse range of communities to get involved and see the hill as a place for them.



3 Normalising natural solutions to climate change

Support regenerative agriculture

We want to support farmers and landowners to create or enhance 5,000 hectares of farmland for wildlife and the climate.

We have continued conversations with a number of landowners around where implementing natural processes could lead. We have also identified several demonstration farms that we can use to showcase the benefits of regenerative agriculture.

We have worked with one farm manager in the Cotswolds to produce a showcase film on the importance of regenerative agriculture and the need to produce healthy food in harmony with the natural world. The film has currently been viewed more than 11,000 times on YouTube and is being used as a demonstrator film by other Trusts within the movement.

Lead Gloucestershire Treescapes

We want to support 2,000 hectares of new woodland.

Delivery has begun on the ground-breaking Severn Treescapes project, a partnership project working across Gloucestershire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire from the Lower Wye Valley in the south to the Wyre Forest in the north. We are using detailed mapping to identify priority sites for tree planting and have so far engaged with 3 schools who are creating tree nurseries to support the project. 41 landowners have been engaged directly and 1,304 people have attended 34 events over the last year.

Lead the Severn Wildbelt

We want to establish 300 hectares of new wetlands.

We launched Eelscapes, an innovative pilot project, in partnership with the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, the Environment Agency and a number of land owners and managers. We have been working together in preparation for connecting wetland sites along the Severn Vale corridor. The project is a fantastic opportunity to demonstrate how landscape-scale conservation can be delivered across areas of complex and multiple landownership, with the aim of developing a model for large-scale floodplain restoration which can be replicated in other catchments across the UK.

The scores are in... 2022-2023 in numbers

In order to meet the targets in our ambitious 2030 strategy, we've set a series of goals to keep track of our progress. This year we have:



Established **10 hectares** of species rich grassland



Got **750 hectares** of wildlife rich habitat underway



Enhanced **500 hectares** of farmland for wildlife and climate



Provided one-off advice to **80 farmers**, land managers and land owners



Secured **50 hectares** of woodland equivalent habitat through the Severn Treescapes project



Engaged **20 schools** and groups in the creation of tree nurseries



Created **10 hectares** of freshwater wetlands



Seen **6,000 actions** for nature logged on the WilderGlos platform



Reached **10,000 people** through the Do One Thing project



Brought nature to life for **4,000 young people** through nature-based learning



Gave **6 million** viewers an insight into the incredible lifecycle of the large blue butterfly at Daneway Banks, on David Attenborough's *Wild Isles*.

Looking ahead – our plans for 2023/24

We are looking forward to delivering the second year of our ambitious 2030 Strategy. Our plans for 2023/24 include:

Delivering the Gloucester and Cheltenham Waterscapes project

Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust are partnering with MORE THAN insurance to deliver the Gloucester and Cheltenham Waterscapes project. The project will help reduce flood risk across Gloucester and Cheltenham through an innovative Natural Flood Management programme.

Delivery of this project will begin shortly with the creation of a wide range of natural flood management interventions, from rain gardens to attenuation ponds. The project will work directly with homeowners on localised interventions, such as driveway de-paving, as part of a broader campaign to promote better understanding of how residents' actions can contribute to flood alleviation and increased biodiversity.

Beaver reintroduction feasibility

In partnership with Forestry England, we will test the feasibility of the wild reintroduction of beavers in Gloucestershire. We'll put together a comprehensive Beaver Strategy that not only considers when and where releases could take place to provide multiple benefits, but also which areas should be avoided or where additional habitat creation or enhancement work is required.

Identifying this additional work would ensure that any population created by a wild reintroduction would be able to support itself, now and into the future. We'll be giving careful consideration to environmental, social and legal factors at a local and regional level and will engage widely with local communities, landowners and interest groups, enabling us to embed lessons learned from our most recent species reintroduction, Project Pine Marten.

Lower Woods grazing project

We will embark on an ambitious conservation grazing project at Lower Woods following the successful implementation of a similar project in the Forest of Dean. Adopting natural processes will enable us to manage habitats on a landscape scale, creating a bigger, better and more connected priority habitat mosaic, restoring ecosystem functions in the process.

Do One Thing project extension

Following a successful pilot in Cheltenham, the National Lottery have provided funding to enable us to extend this project over the next four years. The follow on project will include Gloucester, Cheltenham, Cinderford, Coleford and Tewkesbury, encouraging 40,000 people to take their first steps for the environment. The project aims to empower people to take small scale actions, knowing that their contribution will make a difference to the bigger picture.

Future projects awaiting funding

We're in the process of securing funding for the following range of exciting projects:

Habitat improvements for adders on the Cotswold Escarpment NRZ

Working with partners, we'll deliver a shared strategy for the recovery of the adder in the Cotswold Escarpment Nature Recovery Zone. The adder has been classified as "vulnerable to extinction" and this project will concentrate on habitat suitability on existing sites, together with measures to mitigate the causes of the adder's decline including recreation pressure, impact of predators and climate change. Proposed activities will include hedgerow planting, scrub control, enhancement of woodland rides and glades, livestock grazing, and the creation of log piles and hibernaculum.

Habitat improvements for white clawed crayfish on the River Frome

This project aims to improve the long-term survival chances of white-clawed crayfish (WCC) in the River Frome catchment. WCC were once widespread throughout the whole of the upper River Frome and its tributaries but, like elsewhere in the UK, the species here has been decimated and is now classified as endangered. The project will combine conservation translocations with value-for-money natural flood management to restore these important ecosystem engineers to three of the River Frome's main tributaries. Planned habitat works will include tree and hedge planting, watercourse fencing, and Himalayan balsam control.

Continuation of Nature Nurtures

We would like to continue the innovative Nature Nurtures project which works in partnership with the NHS to support children with low level mental health issues by providing out of school outdoor nature sessions. Following the successful approach of the previous Nature Nurtures project, we will run blocks of sessions, each with the same children, to build relationships and trust. The project will deliver a variety of activities, from bushcraft, nature games, foraging and story-telling, to den building, pond dipping and nature ID. These sessions will be specially tailored to help the children improve their interpersonal skills, resilience, confidence and risk taking.

My Wild Neighbourhood

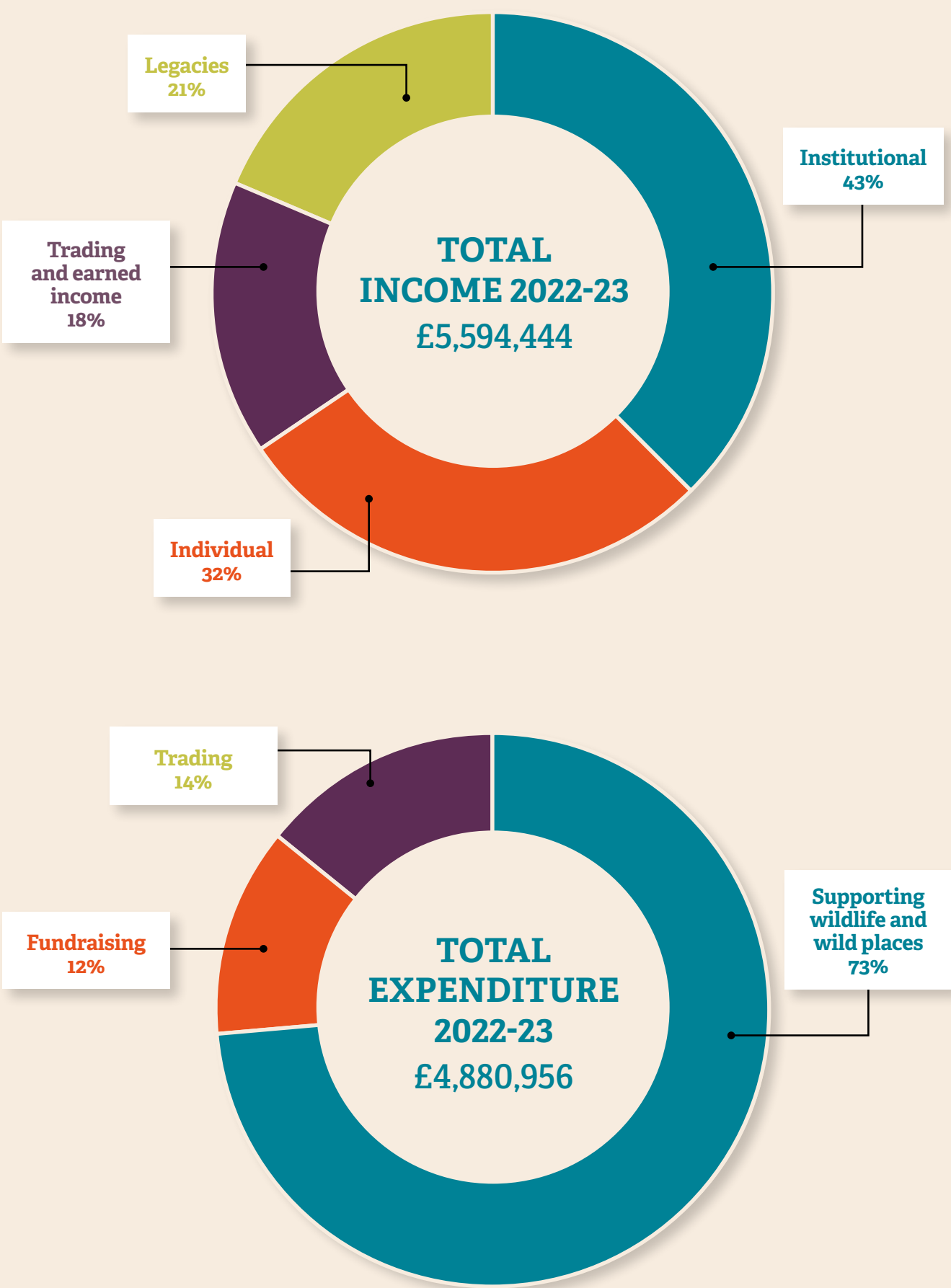
My Wild Neighbourhood is about empowering communities to take sustained action to address the climate and ecological emergencies. We want to pave the way for a cross-county partnership that works to embed community voices into biodiversity and climate planning policy and strategy. In its initial development phase, we will aim to produce a suite of toolkits and innovative events in Gloucestershire, to bring the partners' approaches together at a neighbourhood level. A future delivery phase would test these toolkits and approaches much more widely, across three rural counties.

GRASwolds- Grassland Recovery at Scale in the Cotswolds

Using a landscape-scale approach, this project would create a significant and long-lasting area of species rich grassland in the heart of the Cotswolds. The pilot's aim is to provide the habitat for a range of rare and threatened species, including plants, insects and birds, whilst integrating grasslands into the productive farmed landscape. Currently the central Cotswolds is dominated by cereal production, with the remaining areas of permanent grassland often undermanaged. We propose to work with land owners and farmers to both restore areas of existing grassland and to revert poorly performing areas of arable land into diverse grasslands.



Financial statement



Thank you

Corporate support

Ecclesiastical Insurance
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Everhot
Heber Ltd
Loxley Solicitors
Spirax Sarco
Sudeley Castle & Gardens
The Mortgage Branch
Vine House Farm
Wildlife World Ltd
Willans LLP
Landfill Communities Fund
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Enovert Community Trust
Grundon Waste Management
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Grants

CPRE The Countryside Charity
Cheltenham Borough Council
Cotswold District Council
Cotswold National Landscape
DEFRA
Environment Agency
European Regional Development Fund
Forest of Dean District Council
GFirst LEP
Gloucester City Council
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Gloucestershire Gateway Trust
Gloucestershire Police and Crime Commissioner
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Natural England
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MORE THAN
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The National Lottery Community Fund
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Water Environment Improvement Fund
Woodland Trust
Worcestershire County Council
Wye Valley AONB

Charitable Trusts

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The Verdon-Smith Family Charitable Trust
The Yarrow Trust

Partnerships

BBC Radio Gloucestershire Ourboretum
CLA
Countryside and Community Research Institute
Forestry England
FWAG
Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership
Hartpury University and Hartpury College
Herefordshire Wildlife Trust
NFU
Royal Entomological Society
Severn Rivers Trust
Severn Vale Catchment Partnership
The Queen's Green Canopy
Vincent Wildlife Trust
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Worcestershire Wildlife Trust

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Chedworth and District Horticultural Society
Fair Shares
Forest Hills Senior Golf Club
Forest Holidays
Forest of Dean Area Group
Gloucestershire College
NHS Gloucestershire Integrated Care Board
Oakridge Entertainment Committee
St. James Junior School
The Friendship Café
The Upper Thames Protection Society
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