

Berkshire
Buckinghamshire
Oxfordshire



Annual Review

2020-21



Protecting local wildlife

A review of our year

Welcome to our round-up of what was an extraordinary year. This annual review marks the end of our 2016-21 plan 'Be part of nature's recovery'. Despite the unique challenges due to the Covid-19 pandemic, we continued to make good progress towards the targets of our plan and the Trust continued to operate effectively, working for wildlife across our three counties.

Thanks to our advice, nearly 10,000 ha of land outside our control is now managed better for wildlife. Some 46,000 people took direct action for wildlife or had new access to nature in their lives, thanks to our community work, and there have been a staggering 118,000 volunteer sessions over the last five years. We have also partnered with many local authorities, NGOs and local communities, and engaged with decision-makers to maximise our impact.

On the ground, the pandemic brought huge challenges for how we operate as a Trust and for nature. We saw some of our reserves flooded with visitors, not always bringing with them good news for the precious wildlife that calls them home. Equally, we witnessed a huge upsurge of interest in, and appreciation of, the value of nature across the three counties.

As we look to the next five years we continue to strive for nature's recovery, to connect people and the natural world, and to highlight nature-based solutions to the climate emergency. We want to see more nature everywhere – for everyone – in towns and rural areas, and put nature into recovery in our three counties by 2030. To help us achieve this ambitious long-term goal, we've developed our new 'Wilder' plan for 2021-26 - read more about this on pages 18-19.

Over the last year, many people came to appreciate the importance of the natural world through a new understanding of what it can do for us – for our physical and mental wellbeing. But the nature and climate emergencies continue, and we know that our work is more important than ever to create a thriving, healthy and resilient natural world for nature, climate and people. Your generosity ensures that we can keep working hard to achieve this. Thank you for your continued support.



Joanna Davidson

Joanna Davidson CBE
Chair



Estelle Bailey

Estelle Bailey,
Chief Executive

Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust

September 2021

Read more about our work during 2020-21 in our full Annual Report and Accounts at bbowt.org.uk/publications

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

OUR VISION

More nature everywhere

OUR MISSION

To bring about nature's recovery through local action
To achieve our Wilder vision, we have three main goals:

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

Our Impact 2016-21

The Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust (BBOWT) is one of the biggest Wildlife Trusts in the movement, and we've grown and achieved a lot in the last five years.



86 nature reserves covering **2,667** hectares of land

4 education centres,

2 visitor centres &

1 environmental centre



27,435 memberships now support our work



Inspired **45,000** schoolchildren



118,000 volunteer sessions over the last five years



Launched **Future Nature (Wildlife Trust Consultancy) Limited** and Land Advice Service



6 Living Landscape schemes

Wider countryside work has reached

76,000 hectares – that's already 13% of our region

Advised **625** landowners



46,000 people took direct action for wildlife or had new access to nature in their lives, thanks to our community work

Restore land so it is rich in wildlife

Our 86 nature reserves are natural havens where wildlife can thrive and spread into the wider landscape when conditions are favourable.

This year we developed our climate change 10-year action plan (2020 – 2030), assessing what a warming world will mean for managing habitats and species across Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire. The plan also sets out our practical management and monitoring approach for nature reserves, taking into account the projected changes in our climate.

We launched the West Berkshire Wild Verges project, fully funded by West Berkshire Council. The project aims to improve the rural road network in West Berkshire for wildlife and we're now recruiting volunteers to help us. We continued to make good progress with our exciting new wetland restoration project at Chimney Meadows and our successful Hedgerow Havens project in Buckinghamshire.

Over the last year, we have worked hard with partners to encourage ecological connectivity beyond our reserves. Despite the pandemic we reached 242 landowners through our conservation projects and our new Land Advice Service, and we delivered advice or management resulting in positive gains for wildlife on 3,602ha of land beyond our reserves.



243 biological surveys carried out on our nature reserves

650 flowering military orchids counted at Swains Wood, double the previous year's count

75km waterways surveyed for water vole activity with nearly half the surveys positive for water vole activity



CASE STUDY: Champions for floodplain meadows

During the year we completed the purchase of both Pixey Mead and Arncott Bridge Meadows thanks to the generous support of our members and grant-givers. Pixey Mead is one of the most studied and celebrated floodplain meadows in Britain, which Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust is proud to incorporate into our protected reserve landholding. It adds to our floodplain meadows portfolio along the River Thames in Oxfordshire.

Arncott Bridge Meadows is a Site of Special Scientific Interest, which has been incorporated into our Upper Ray Meadows nature reserve and sits at the heart of our Bernwood Forest and Ray Valley Living Landscape on the Buckinghamshire/Oxfordshire border.

Floodplain meadows are one of the most vulnerable habitats in the UK and we're proud to manage around 10% of the remainder, using our knowledge and expertise to restore and manage these sites, which are so important for nature and climate.

Species-rich grassland, like floodplain meadows, are also huge carbon stores and when managed carefully, e.g. with a traditional summer hay cut and aftermath grazing, they lock in carbon and boost biodiversity. They also store floodwaters, protecting urban areas downstream, which will become increasingly important as the impacts of the climate crisis increase. Through safeguarding and connecting more floodplains we are not only helping wildlife and climate, but people, too.



We care for **10%** of the remaining floodplain meadows (MG4) in the UK

In good condition floodplain meadows support **40** plant species per square metre

97% of wildflower meadows have been lost in the UK in the last 100 years

We are not only helping wildlife and climate, but people, too

Connect with people and communities

Our work to connect and inspire thousands of people with the natural world continued despite the pandemic and we saw a huge increase in interest in nature.

The past year saw people flood to our reserves in huge numbers, although our visitor centres and education centres were sadly closed for a number of months.

Through local 'Wild' projects, volunteering and community engagement work, we continued to increase opportunities for people and communities to get involved with their local nature reserves and green spaces. We focussed on educating people about how to enjoy these spaces without damaging the more fragile habitats, as well as building our online and virtual engagement tools to reach people during the Covid-19 lockdowns.

Our popular webinars showed participants how even small actions, like making their garden more wildlife-friendly, can have a big impact for the natural environment when lots of people act for nature together.

39,666 followers on social media

960,000 unique website visits, more than double for the previous period

More than **30,000** email subscribers



CASE STUDY: Keeping connected by going online

Like many organisations across the world, we had to adapt quickly to the restrictions of the pandemic to stay in touch with our supporters. Unable to meet face-to-face for much of the year, we increased our digital content to provide our supporters with ideas for activities to connect them with nature close to home.

Thanks to a generous grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, we could increase our digital reach and engagement, including via a new live webcam that brought College Lake's amazing wildlife direct to people's homes.

Our education teams rose to the challenge of connecting with children who were learning from home by creating and filming Wild Live sessions for primary schools. They Zoomed into homes and classrooms taking children on a wild adventure via a virtual exploration of our nature reserves, introducing some of the creatures that live

on them. These sessions now form part of our ongoing environmental education offer.

We went online with our conservation clubs for 8-16-year-olds too. The success of this – and the ability to reach participants from across Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire – has meant that we have kept an online club running since resuming our face-to-face activities.

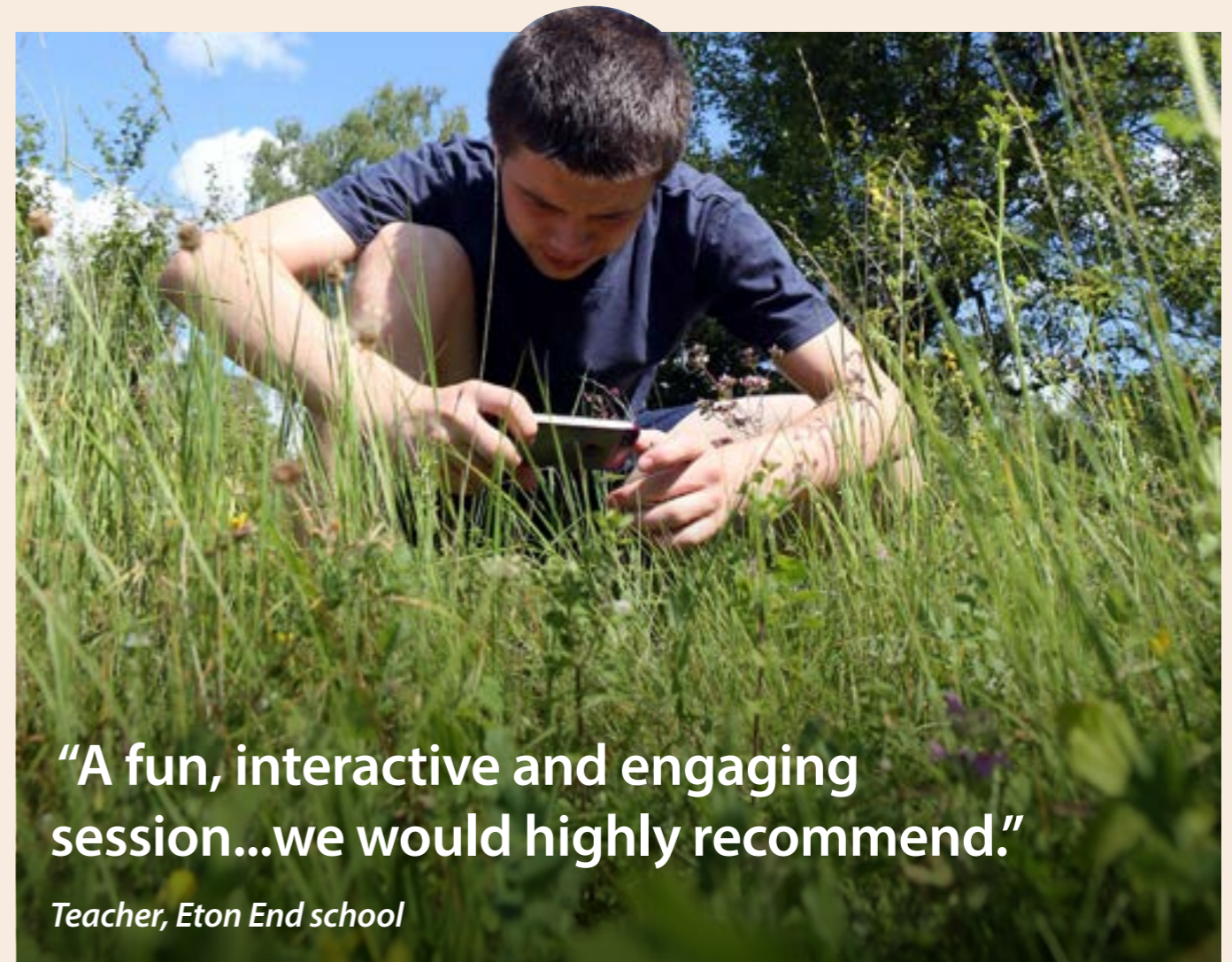
Our community team launched a podcast and ran webinars to help parish councils and local people to act to benefit wildlife. We ran several Facebook Live gardening advice sessions and created a series of popular two-minute wildlife gardening videos.

We saw people increasingly turn to nature and their local green spaces for solace during the toughest of years. By adapting and evolving our communications we stayed connected with our supporters and reached new audiences, and in turn we saw our digital engagement surge.

First Youth Summit piloted, aimed at people aged 14-25 years old

10 community webinars delivered with over **660** people attending

8 Wild Live school sessions delivered



"A fun, interactive and engaging session...we would highly recommend."

Teacher, Eton End school

Value nature by explaining its benefits


We will only make real progress when everything that nature does for us (all the economic and social benefits of the natural world) is recognised and valued by decision-makers, landowners, planners and developers.

Throughout the five years of the strategic plan, we have been highlighting the health and wellbeing benefits that come from engaging with nature. We have also been illustrating the multiple services delivered from nature-based solutions such as improving soil health, mitigating flood risk, and increasing carbon sequestration. Our aim is to encourage businesses to recognise and invest in nature, to support the long-term sustainability of their operations.


We have also been working with decision-makers to help put nature at the heart of all new developments, major new infrastructure projects and community facilities. We now have more than 300 Wildlife Ambassadors working with us to help give nature a voice in policy and planning decisions.



320 Wildlife Ambassadors



Nearly 15,000 planning applications screened



4,480 people signed the Action for Insects petition



CASE STUDY: Rising to the 30 Days Wild challenge

The *30 Days Wild* challenge is The Wildlife Trusts' biggest annual campaign. The premise is simple: to do one wild thing every day during June, which helps to demonstrate that nature is all around us and doesn't need any specialist knowledge to enjoy. These 'random acts of wildness' range from walking barefoot on grass, to sitting beneath a tree or watching birds on a feeder. Participants took direct action for local wildlife as part of the challenge too, such as litter picking or feeding their garden birds, and also enjoyed increasing their knowledge of the natural world.

June 2020 saw record numbers of people signing up to take part including more than 6,000 people in our area, from more than 130,000 nationwide. Participants included

individuals and families, schools, care homes and local businesses. Everyone who signed up received either a postal or digital pack to inspire them and help track their progress through the challenge.

The campaign is a key method of increasing brand awareness as more than 80% of participants in 2020 were not members. *30 Days Wild* has also been proven to positively affect health, happiness and pro-nature behaviours in a five-year review with the University of Derby. The feel-good factor from simple, daily contact with nature can last for months, and the people who benefit most are those who have a relatively weak connection with nature at the start.



More than 6,000 people from our region took part in the 30 Days Wild challenge

95% increase in participants from 2019



88% of participants are more likely to take action for nature after taking part in 30 Days Wild*



"Just taking time out of the day to complete a random act of wildness helps to calm me and improve my mood"

30 Days Wild participant

Partner with others to maximise our impact

To make real progress towards nature's recovery at a landscape-scale, we join forces with other organisations to combine our expertise.

We have strong partnerships with a range of organisations and individuals. We engage with businesses, other NGOs, local authorities, the Environment Agency, Forestry Commission and political leaders to put the case for wildlife.

We work through the media, and directly with local politicians, to highlight the gains and the challenges to nature, including the impact of High Speed Two in our region and the Oxford-Cambridge Growth Arc. By collaborating with others, we inspire our communities to act for nature, which helps us to achieve our goal of wilder and more connected 'Living Landscapes' across our towns, cities and countryside.



 All **21** local MPs engaged with

Engaged with over **200** local councillors 

26 Investors in Wildlife corporate partners 



CASE STUDY: Going wild in Bicester

Wild Bicester is a collaborative project, bringing people and nature together to create a greener, healthier and wilder Bicester. Wild urban patches and green spaces are crucial, offering essential habitat, connecting wild places, and bringing wildlife, and the benefits of a healthy natural world, into our lives.

Working with Healthy Bicester, Bicester Garden Town, Cherwell District Council and the local community, we have held a series of events, activities and provided resources. The project seeks to inspire and enable people of all ages and backgrounds to get involved and turn their homes and communities into wildlife-rich spaces, whilst emphasising the impact that nature can have on individual and community wellbeing.

Councillor Andrew McHugh, Cherwell's Lead Member for Health and Wellbeing says, "Wild Bicester is a great example of how we can work together, benefiting from the experts at BBOWT, to encourage greater biodiversity and support local ecology

groups to put nature and wildlife at the heart of our communities."

We need more space for wildlife to thrive, and we know that restoring nature and our connection to it can help solve many of our most pressing environmental, economic and social problems. We must see nature recovering - for the sake of wild plants and animals, and for everything it brings us: better health, climate control, flood management, enjoyment, employment and more - with wild places linked up into a vast, rich nature network.

As part of that network we need wilder neighbourhoods, villages and towns. The benefits of greening towns and villages are far-reaching and even small actions, such as leaving verges uncut, can help nature's recovery. Gardens, parks, allotments, school grounds, churchyards and community spaces can all offer something for nature and, in doing so, can bring people together, creating healthier and more socially connected communities.



4 project partners

Training
local
conservation
volunteers



Working
with **10**
community
groups

"A hugely exciting opportunity for more people to get closer to nature in their everyday lives"

Ed Munday, Wild Bicester Project Officer



Building our capacity to deliver

Everything we do depends on the organisation being efficient, financially robust, well-led and governed effectively.

Our dedicated staff work tirelessly for wildlife across our three counties and we have supported and equipped them to continue striving for nature's recovery this year – in spite of the pandemic. In turn we've been supported by our volunteers, giving generously of their time when restrictions allowed.

We rely on the generosity and support of existing members and the thousands of new ones who joined us this year, as well as donations, legacies and grants. We are working to increase our income by developing innovative new income streams. We ensure that Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust has robust systems and governance processes that are fit for purpose and compliant with regulatory standards.

We continued our work to recruit more supporters over the year. While one of our usual recruitment methods paused, we adapted and increased our digital recruitment. We were rewarded with the highest ever number of members by the end of the year. This is testament to people increasingly valuing nature and seeing the importance of protecting it.

More than **1,700** volunteers

13,371 volunteer sessions

137 members of staff dedicated to nature's recovery



CASE STUDY: Working together for wildlife

The Wildlife Trusts' long-term partnership with Vine House Farm ticks so many boxes – working with a farm dedicated to wildlife-friendly farming techniques, helping people care for their garden wildlife, and generating income for Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust to do more for local wildlife. Every sale at Vine House Farm supports the work of The Wildlife Trusts.

Estelle Bailey says, "I've had a life-long love of birds, which is one reason I'm so proud of our partnership with Vine House Farm. Watching and feeding garden birds can introduce people to a love of wildlife on their doorstep. Knowing that our partnership helps the Trust to do even more for our local wildlife, while helping our supporters look after their garden birds is so important to me."

Last year we received the biggest income from Vine House Farm out of all Wildlife Trusts and saw more than 300 new customers from

our area. It is rewarding to see that people's newfound interest in their garden wildlife, perhaps driven in part by the pandemic lockdowns, was able to have a big impact on BBOWT's work too.

This income helps us to manage our own nature reserves for wildlife, including birds, providing somewhere safe for them to breed and raise the next generation, at a time when they need our help more than ever before. We're able to carefully manage our hedgerows and farmland to help birds like yellowhammers and linnets. Vine House Farm's support helps us to clear scrub on our heathland reserves for endangered ground-nesting birds like nightjars. We can look after more of our wetland reserves where birds like lapwings and oystercatchers can raise their families in safety.

Thank you to all of you who chose Vine House Farm to help support your local wildlife.



£6,600 increase on last year

486 new customers up from 182



Overall income £17,614 – an all-time high

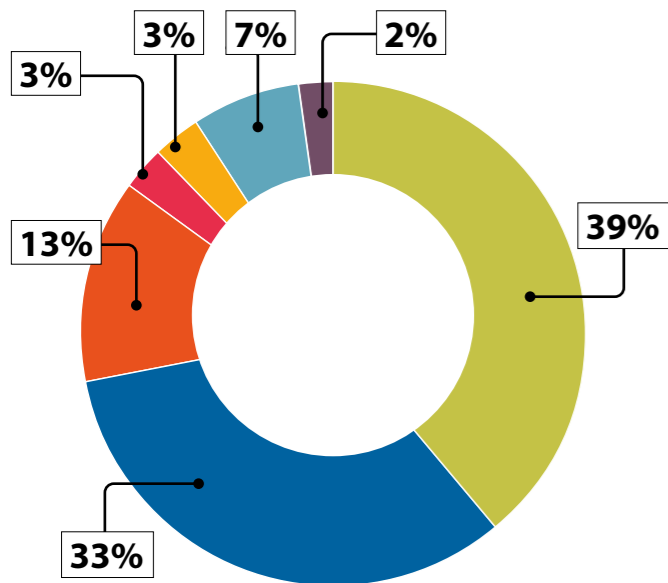


Wildlife-friendly gardening helps to create key wildlife corridors

2020-21 Financial Review

78p
from every £ is
spent on our
conservation
and **education**
work

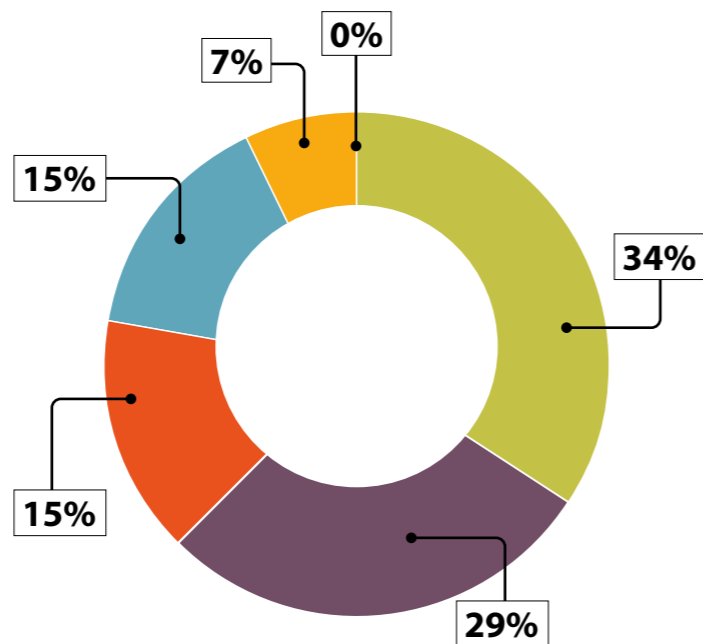
The Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust continues to maintain a healthy financial position. Income from membership and membership donations, donations and legacies from individuals, grants and corporate donations, agri-environment scheme grants, and investments all increased through the year, despite the huge impact of the pandemic.



Income 2020-2021

Total: £7.02m
£000s

£2,732	39% Membership and donations
£2,319	33% Grants and corporate donations
£939	13% Individual donations and legacies
£220	3% Trading activities
£193	3% Investment income
£474	7% Agri-environment scheme income
£138	2% Other income



Expenditure 2020-2021

Total: £6.44m
£000s

£2,205	34% Nature reserve management
£1,824	29% Wildlife awareness and education
£978	15% Looking after the wider countryside
£969	15% Membership and fundraising costs
£434	7% Trading costs
£28	0% Investment costs

Membership

Fundraising promise...

The Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust is committed to fundraising and communicating in an honest and transparent way.

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

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



More than
50,000
members



Gifts in Wills of
£647k



4,048 new
memberships
during the year



10,552
Wildlife Watch
Club members

Overall income
from membership
and membership
donations grew to
£2,732k

89
new people
pledging to
leave a gift
to BBOWT in
their Will

39% 
of our
income is from
membership
and donations

Thank you to our supporters

The Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust relies on the generosity of its members and other supporters. Without this support we would not be able to achieve our aim to lead the way for nature's recovery and to connect people with nature. Thank you to the following organisations and individuals who have supported BBOWT during the 2020-21 financial year.

President

Steve Backshall

Honorary Vice-Presidents

Sir Henry Aubrey-Fletcher
Dr Pam Berry
Dr Robin Buxton MBE, DL
Professor Sir Dieter Helm CBE
Martin Spray CBE
Lady Audrey Wood

Board of Trustees

Joanna Davidson (Chair)
Graeme Thompson (Honorary Treasurer)
Ian Davidson (Honorary Secretary)
Frances Brindle
Jane Cotton
Natalie Ganpatsingh
Julie Macken (resigned 9 March 2021)
Chris Mees
Mike Pollard
Gregory Webster

Charitable Trusts (£1,000+)

Dorothy Holmes Charitable Trust
Richard Radcliffe Trust
The Banister Charitable Trust
The Bouttell Bequest
The Joe and Rosa Frankle Charitable Trust
The Robert Pilgrim Photographic Trust
The Woodcote Trust
Todhunter Baldwin Charitable Trust (NPT)

Corporate Partners

A Menarini Logistics	Kings Centre
Alnylam	NatureBureau
Anne Veck Hair	Neve's Bees
Berkshire Botanical	NFU Mutual Witney & Oxford
Blenheim Palace Estate	Agency
Bowles and Wyer	Nurture Landscapes
Country Land and Business	Oracle
Association	Oxford Bus Company
Darklight Design	QuickMoveNow
DCS Group	Ssassy Property
English Provender Company	Seacourt Ltd
Freeths	Sophos
Hindsight Consultancy	Thames Water
Holidays in the Cotswolds	Whitley Stimpson
Ipsen	Vine House Farm
Johnson Matthey	

Grant-making and Statutory Bodies

Environment Agency
Hedge and Woodland Conservationists
North Bucks Bat Group
Thames Water
The National Lottery Community Fund
The National Lottery Heritage Fund
The Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts
Water Environment Grant

Landfill Communities Fund

Biffa Award
FCC Community Grant
Grundon Waste Management Ltd
RDPE Leader
The Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment (TOE)

Local Authorities

Buckinghamshire County Council
Cherwell District Council
Vale of White Horse District Council
West Berkshire Council

Legators

We are extremely grateful to the following people who left a bequest to BBOWT in their Will...

David Bayliss
Francis Carnwath
Heather Coffey
Jonathan Cousins
John Cudmore
Peter Esslemont
Barbara Galway
Janet Glanvill
Keith Holly
James Hubbard
Brian Kemp
Elizabeth Knibbs
William Laing
Jane Matheson
Margaret Povey
Daphne Prue
Audrey Rawlence
Harriet Ryley
John Sellick

Patrons

Professor & Mrs Helm
Jean and Roger Jefcoate CBE, DL
Liz Ware



Looking forward to 2021-26. Our plans for the next year and beyond

'Wilder', our new strategic plan for 2021-26. Our ambition for wildlife is bigger and bolder than ever before.

Our 'Wilder' plan sets one simple overarching aim: to create more nature everywhere. It takes us further towards our long-term goal of 30% of the land across Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire well managed for nature by 2030.

It is an ambitious plan, and we know we can't do it on our own. We must look beyond the boundaries of the land we own and manage and think more on a landscape scale. We need to inspire people to take action for nature, and we need to do all we can to restore wilder landscapes.

This plan has three goals: to put nature into recovery, to empower people to act for nature and to secure our future. In the first year of this plan we will be working across our three goals to deliver an innovative and inspiring programme to drive forward our Wilder vision.

The next five years

By 2026, our Wilder plan will mean that we will see nature in our region on the road to recovery, with wilder, more connected landscapes, and struggling species now starting to thrive. We'll have a major rewilding demonstration project and key species reintroductions on the horizon.

Our mission is to bring about nature's recovery through local action. We'll be working with more decision-makers, developers and land managers, so we're all working with nature, not against it. And thousands more people across our three



counties will be inspired to take action to help bring back our precious wildlife. Only then can we achieve our vision of more nature everywhere for everyone – for people, for nature and for climate. A wilder Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire, where we can all live and thrive.

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



More nature everywhere

**Your local Wildlife Trust brings
people and nature together
to protect our environment.**

Our experts work with more than 1,700 volunteers to look after 86 nature reserves, four education centres and run hundreds of amazing events. We rely on the generosity of individuals, charitable trusts and businesses. To find out more or to support our work visit bbowt.org.uk

The Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust is one of 46 Wildlife Trusts across the UK. Together The Wildlife Trusts form the largest UK voluntary organisation dedicated to protecting wildlife and wild places on land and at sea.

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