



**Berkshire  
Buckinghamshire  
& Oxfordshire**  
Wildlife Trust



# Our Impact Report

2022-23

**More nature everywhere, for everyone**



# Working together for a **wilder future**

Welcome to our Impact Report for 2022-23, showcasing some of the highlights that your support has helped us to achieve over the year.

**T**his is the second year of our five-year Strategic Plan, “Wilder”, which has one simple overarching aim: to create more nature everywhere, for everyone.

Through your generous support we have continued to ensure our nature reserves are havens for wildlife, worked with partners on innovative landscape-scale projects beyond our reserves and helped local communities to run their own projects to restore nature on their doorsteps.

Our vision for a wilder future in Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire is more important than ever. Your support helps us to work towards our aim of 30% of the land across our three counties to be well managed for nature by 2030.

Scientists around the world have made it clear that restoring nature is a vital factor in tackling the climate crisis. By working together, we can create bigger, wilder, more connected landscapes across our three counties so nature can thrive and adapt to the effects of the changing climate.

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

With our best wishes,



*George Levvy*

**George Levvy** Chair



*Estelle Bailey*

**Estelle Bailey** Chief Executive

## **Berkshire, Buckinghamshire & Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust** September 2023

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

### **Our vision**

More nature everywhere, for  
everyone

### **Our mission**

To bring about nature’s  
recovery through local action

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

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

JON HAWKINS



GEORGE LEVY & ESTELLE BAILEY: CHRIS DEENEY. COVER IMAGE: PAUL BRENNAN

“BBOWT’s wonderful work to protect nature and inspire people is making a huge difference in our area. If we all work together, we can have a wilder future. Thank you for your support!”

*Steve Backshall, BBOWT President*

# Our impact in numbers

Your support helped us achieve all this and more in 2022-23



Working with partners  
– including Finance  
Earth, Bucks Council,  
West Berkshire Council,  
the Floodplain Meadows Partnership, local  
councils and landowners

Read more about  
what we've achieved during  
2022-23 thanks to your  
support in our full Annual  
Report and Accounts at  
[bbowt.org.uk/  
publications](https://bbowt.org.uk/publications)



**28,711**  
memberships,  
a new high



**£202,680** of  
external funding  
secured for 10 new  
projects improving  
habitats and access on  
our nature reserves



**57%** increase in  
local and national  
media coverage



Working in **2**  
new urban areas –  
Reading and Slough



**2,643ha**  
land managed  
by BBOWT



**85** nature  
reserves



**96%** of planning  
applications responded to by  
BBOWT withdrawn, refused  
or amended with improved  
considerations for wildlife



**250km** road  
verges surveyed in  
West Berkshire through  
our Wild Verges project



Delivered conservation  
projects across a total  
area of **93,615ha**



**6** Living Landscapes



**719** campaigning  
Wildlife Ambassadors



**25ha** of previously  
leased land at Woolley Firs  
now under direct BBOWT  
management for nature



**161km**  
watercourses  
surveyed for  
water vole activity

# Putting nature into **recovery**

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

Our total land holding is now 85 nature reserves covering 2,643ha. At 221ha Upper Ray Meadows on the Oxfordshire/Buckinghamshire border is now our third largest reserve and our second largest freehold property after Chimney Meadows in Oxfordshire. These large, interconnected nature reserves support a wide range of habitats from flower-rich meadows to wet pasture, with rare wading birds such as curlew breeding here. Upper Ray Meadows is a key part of our Bernwood Forest and Ray Valley Living Landscape and at the heart of our Restoring Bernwood, Otmoor and Ray project (see page 5).

By working with landowners in the Upper Thames Living Landscape we produced a vision map of wetland creation opportunities for 45ha adjacent to Duxford Old River, part of Chimney Meadows. We have re-invigorated the Upper Thames farmer cluster, bringing together previous members along with new landowners, all engaged in delivering nature's recovery across their combined 3,602ha.

We continued our 'Meadows for the Climate' project funded by Ecover and in partnership with the Floodplain Meadows Partnership and Long Mead's Thames Valley Wildflower Meadow Restoration Project. Results from years one and two of the study show high levels of soil carbon stored in ancient floodplain meadows and restored meadows, compared with lower amounts of carbon in arable fields. The results of this important research will be revealed after the final year of sampling in 2023.



**“The expert advice provided by BBOWT and the in-depth knowledge of the processes for restoring floodplain meadows with green hay was invaluable. I greatly benefitted from the years of floodplain restoration experience that the team at Chimney Meadows has and the support provided throughout the delivery of my project.”**

*Ellie MacDonald, Floodplain conservation project officer,  
Freshwater Habitats Trust.*



**425 southern damselflies**  
recorded at Parsonage  
Moor in a single survey



**19 common tern nests**  
and **15 lapwing nests**  
recorded at College Lake



**9 species of fish, and otters,**  
recorded using the new river  
channel at Duxford Old River





# Spotlight on working with partners to create a wilder region

This year, we completed the Reconnecting Bernwood, Otmoor and Ray feasibility study, with funding from Buckinghamshire Council, Natural England and the Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Natural Environment Partnership.

The 300km<sup>2</sup> Bernwood Otmoor Ray (BOR) landscape lies between the large urban centres of Oxford, Bicester and Aylesbury. It contains nationally important but increasingly fragmented habitats such as ancient woodland, species-rich grassland and floodplain meadows, and includes BBOWT's Bernwood Forest and Ray Valley Living Landscape.

The study aimed to identify key opportunities for nature and people in the BOR landscape. More than 200 people were consulted, including environmental groups, local authorities, statutory agencies, landowners, farmers, and communities.

Six priority project concepts were agreed, which will form the basis of a new landscape-scale programme of work. These projects will help to ensure that vitally important BOR sites are protected, restored, extended and connected up at scale for the benefit of wildlife and people.

## Projects include:

- a farmer cluster group to enable better connected habitats and wildlife corridors across agricultural land;
- health and wellbeing, nature connection and volunteering projects with local communities;
- a hedges and edges project to create ecological corridors and empower people to support nature's recovery on their doorstep;
- a project to create and improve a mosaic of connected wildlife habitats that enhance people's access to nature;
- a woodland project to protect and restore ancient woodland sites around Bernwood Forest;
- an ambitious river restoration project to develop the Ray river valley into a nationally important wetland complex.

Read more about the Reconnecting Bernwood, Otmoor and Ray project at [bbowt.org.uk/reconnecting-bernwood-otmoor-and-ray](https://bbowt.org.uk/reconnecting-bernwood-otmoor-and-ray)

**“Together, with our partners, such as BBOWT, we can create a greener and more biodiverse Buckinghamshire and beyond for all to enjoy.”**

*Gareth Williams, Buckinghamshire Council's Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Environment*



**300km<sup>2</sup>** project area on the Buckinghamshire/Oxfordshire border



**200** people consulted



**6** priority project concepts identified



# Empowering people to **act for nature**

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

**T**his year, our education centres have increased the informal learning sessions offered. All sites now offer lifelong learning opportunities, from wildlife clubs for pre-schoolers and children aged 8-17 years to courses for adults. The aim is to make our centres relevant to more people in different ways, using a variety of subjects – including basket weaving, moth identification, creative writing and more.

We're delighted that Windsor Great Park Environment Centre reopened its doors as part of our partnership with the Crown Estate. We offer a full range of activities here alongside our other four education centres.

The community wildlife team continues to inspire and aid communities across our three counties as part of our Rough Around the Edges project in the Chilterns, (part of the Chalk, Cherries and Chairs Landscape with the Chilterns Conservation Board) and the Wild Bicester and Banbury projects.

We have significantly increased our number of campaigning Wildlife Ambassadors to more than 700 people, who go a step further for nature by writing to or meeting their local councillors and MPs.

We have also formed a new Board for the refreshed Berkshire Local Nature Partnership (LNP) and continued to support the new Oxfordshire LNP as it becomes established. We are working closely with local authorities in each of our three counties to create Local Nature Recovery Strategies to contribute towards 30% of our land being protected for nature.



**“This is an excellent opportunity for children to recognise the links between looking after their own health and looking after the health of the environment around us.”**

*Cllr Graham Bridgman, West Berkshire Council's Executive Member for Health and Wellbeing on the Wild West Berkshire Schools project*



**261** new volunteers



**218** students taught about healthy minds, bodies and planet through the Wild West Berkshire Schools project



**25** classes from 15 local schools benefitted from fully funded visits to our education centres thanks to our bursary programme





# Spotlight on reaching new communities

Our Nextdoor Nature project is helping green-fingered residents in Reading and Slough, in Berkshire, connect with nature and turn more areas of their towns wild through a network of new natural spaces.

Neighbours in Southcote, a suburb of Reading, have been busy planting bee-friendly flowers and herbs in Coronation Square to boost local wildlife and bring their community together. Further plans are in the pipeline to complete similar projects in Reading with support, training and expert advice from BBOWT. As well as Coronation Square, BBOWT is working with Newtown Community Garden 'rewilding' project on the other side of town.

In Slough, we've supported members of The Ujala Foundation, a charitable Muslim organisation, to create a wildlife garden in their grounds with wildlife friendly planting and homes for wildlife including bird boxes and bug hotels, and held nature-based arts and crafts sessions. We've also visited the Rajasthani Welfare Society to discuss improving their garden for wildlife, joined litter picking events in the town and taken part in a repair café.

The projects have been co-created with the community groups, with BBOWT in a mentoring role offering training, support and advice about nature. This means the groups can continue to do great things for local wildlife once BBOWT's involvement ends.

Nextdoor Nature is funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and aims to leave a lasting legacy to mark the late Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

Find out more:

[bbowt.org.uk/nextdoor-nature-projects](http://bbowt.org.uk/nextdoor-nature-projects)

**"This is a nice area with a massive multicultural community, and we want to build that community. We're already growing, but this summer when we see the flowers it will really have that 'wow factor' – everyone will smile and it will create a great impression."** *Nahulasalingam Abiram, Postmaster and café owner in Coronation Square, Reading*



**10** events in Slough



**5** groups and organisations worked with in Slough



**4** groups and organisations engaged with in Reading



# Securing our **future**

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

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

Despite concerns on the impact of the cost of living on our supporters, our membership has reached another all-time high, with more than 28,700 memberships. This demonstrates the importance of nature to so many people in our three counties and we remain inspired by and incredibly grateful to all our donors and supporters. We are committed to maximising the resources we have to ensure they deliver the greatest possible impact for nature.

We developed and launched our Equality, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EEDI) plan to help us retain and recruit staff and volunteers from all sectors of the communities in which we work, and to help us increase our network of supporters.

We also continue to monitor our own carbon footprint and embed sustainability practices throughout the organisation, such as installing solar panels and setting up our Green Team voluntary staff working group.

We launched the Meles Circle for individuals able to give transformational gifts to BBOWT, and the Legacy Society to thank individuals who choose to leave gifts in their Wills to BBOWT.



**55,000+** members



**£3m+** income  
from memberships



**Legacy Society and  
Meles Circle** launched

**“I am very glad to support BBOWT through the Meles Circle because their expertly managed reserves provide a patchwork of protective havens for nature. They also work dynamically with landowners and policy makers to create nature-friendly habitats so wildlife can spread back out into our countryside. They are an invaluable force for good for our local nature.”**

*Rose Dale, member of BBOWT's Meles Circle*





# Spotlight on wildlife gardening for all

Together, our gardens make up a vast Living Landscape. With an estimated 24 million gardens in the UK, the way they are cared for can make a big difference to the natural world.

This year, we have installed an accessible wildlife garden at Sutton Courtenay Environmental Education Centre (SCEEC) in Oxfordshire.

It was created with help from garden designer Laura Heybrook and Oxfordshire's Freshwater Habitats Trust and aims to inspire all our visitors about how easy it can be to help wildlife at home.

The garden has three borders showing different techniques. Charlotte Howe, learning officer at SCEE, said, "Our garden showcases a huge range of brilliant ways to help loads of different species, from flowers to attract bees and butterflies to bird feeders and nest boxes. This garden gives an inspiring example of what can be done at home whatever space people have."

We're delighted to have this resource that lets people of all ages and abilities learn about wildlife gardening through our lifelong learning programme at the education centre, stretching from Nature Tots through Rangers to adult sessions and family events.

The garden was generously supported by Bartlett Taylor Charitable Trust, CLA Charitable Trust, Doris Field Charitable Trust, The D'Oyly Carte Charitable Trust, Ipsen Biopharm Ltd, Roger & Jean Jefcoate CBE DL and Stanton Ballard Charitable Trust.

Find out more about helping gardening at home at [bbowt.org.uk/actions](http://bbowt.org.uk/actions)

"We wanted to...show off all the natural world that we could during the changing seasons of the year, whether frogs or toads, bees or bats, newts or birds, butterflies and moths, wild flowers and vegetables - and of course the weeds, which are just lovely plants growing in the wrong place!"

*Laura Heybrook, Garden, Landscape and Architectural Design*



**100** events for all ages held at SCEE



**46** school classes visited SCEE



**53** edible plants now growing in the wildlife garden



# Our finances

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

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

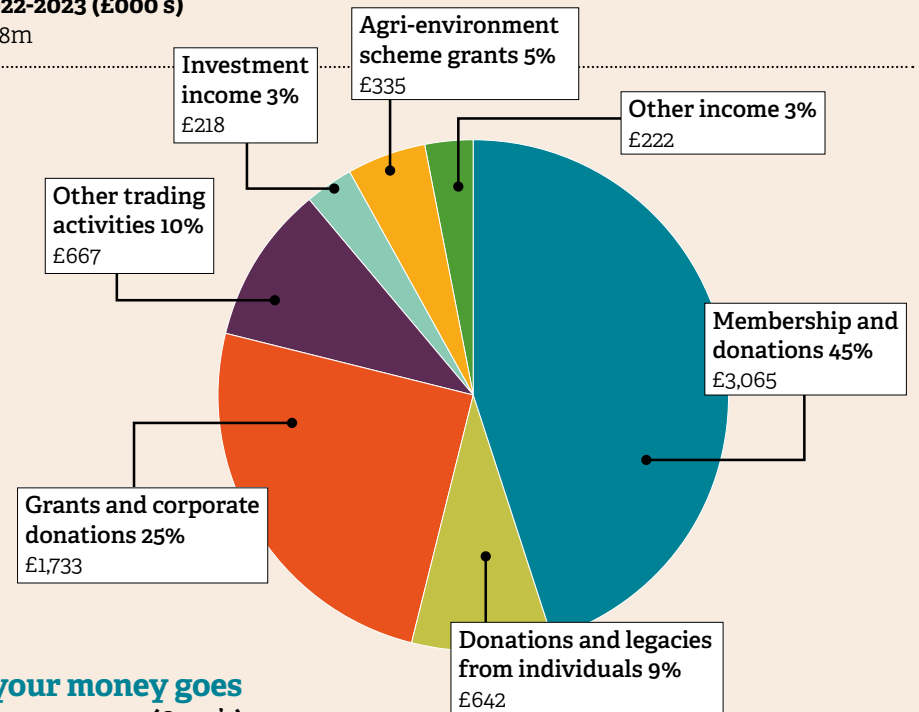


CHRIS GOMERSALL/2020VISION

## How you support us

Income 2022-2023 (£000's)

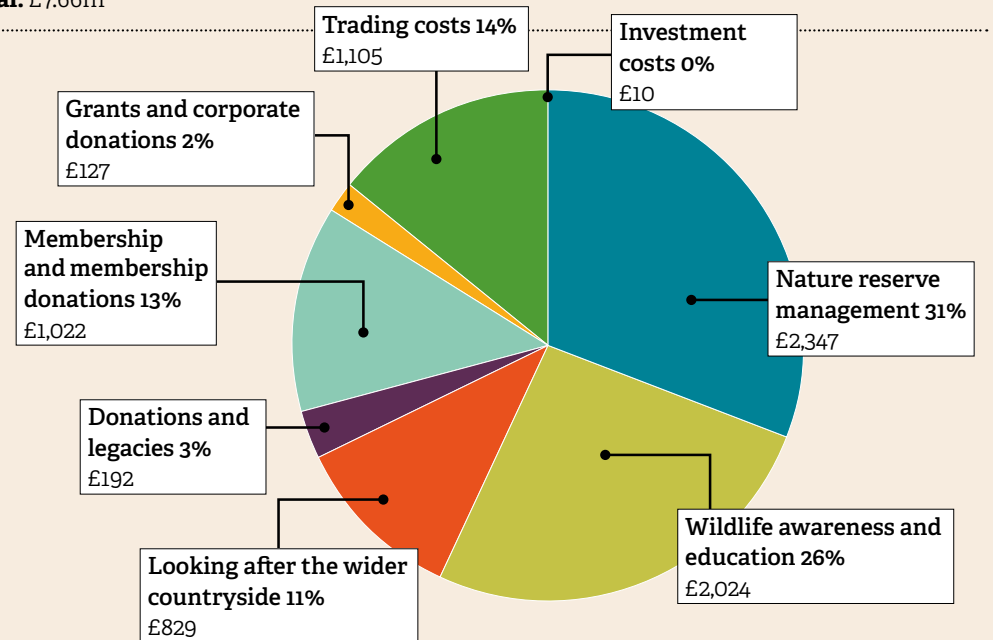
Total: £6.88m



## Where your money goes

Expenditure 2022-2023 (£000's)

Total: £7.66m





# Our members

## Fundraising promise...

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

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

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



“What you are doing is more important than ever. You have my utmost support for as long as I am able. Thank you.”

*BBOWT member, annual survey 2022*



More than  
**55,000**  
members



**£3m+**  
income received  
from memberships



**3,479** new  
memberships  
during the year



**10,081** Wildlife  
Watch Club members



**54%** of our income  
is from membership,  
donations and legacies



# Thank you to **our Supporters**

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

**W**e would like to thank the following organisations and individuals who have generously supported Berkshire, Buckinghamshire & Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust during the 2022-23 financial year. We would like to particularly acknowledge the continued support from individuals and organisations that enabled us to carry on with our work through the challenge of the cost of living crisis.

## **President**

Steve Backshall

## **Honorary Vice-Presidents**

Dr Pam Berry  
Dr Robin Buxton MBE DL CEnv FCIEEM  
Professor Sir Dieter Helm CBE  
Martin Spray CBE  
Audrey, Lady Wood

## **Board of Trustees**

George Levvy (Chair)  
Graeme Thompson (Honorary Treasurer)  
Ian Davidson (Honorary Secretary) – resigned 8 October 2022  
Frances Brindle (Deputy Chair)  
Jane Cotton – resigned 8 October 2022  
Natalie Ganpatsingh  
Chris Mees – resigned 8 October 2022  
Mike Pollard – resigned 8 October 2022  
Gregory Webster  
Drew Bennellick  
Miles Evans  
Zoe Hancock – appointed 27 July 2022  
Mark Chacksfield – appointed 27 July 2022  
Tim Davies – appointed 27 July 2022  
Garth Clark – appointed 6 December 2022

## **Charitable Trusts (£2,000+)**

Brian D Newman Foundation for the Environment  
Greenham Trust  
Mr & Mrs J A Pye's Charitable Settlement  
The Banister Trust  
The Cecil Pilkington Charitable Trust  
The CLA Charitable Trust  
The David Brooke Charity  
The Dorothy Holmes Charitable Trust  
The D'Oyly Carte Charitable Trust  
The Du Plessis Family Foundation  
The Joe and Rosa Frenkel Charitable Trust  
The Richard Radcliffe Charitable Trust  
The Rothschild Foundation

## **Statutory organisations**

DEFRA  
Environment Agency  
Natural England

## **Grant making bodies**

Chilterns Conservation Board  
National Lottery Community Fund  
Newt Conservation Project  
North Wessex AONB  
RSWT  
Thames Water  
The Crown Estate

**“We know that by supporting BBOWT we are helping to make a difference in the communities we serve. That is why our support over the years has extended beyond donations to supporting BBOWT's legacy programme, AGMs, the Wild Guide and the use of our meeting rooms for strategic meetings.”** *Sarah Foster, Managing Partner, Freeths LLP*

## **Landfill Communities Fund**

Grundon  
Veoila Environmental Trust

## **District Councils**

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

## **Local businesses**

Panasonic  
Sula Innovation

## **Business Engagement Partners**

A Menarini Diagnostics UK  
Anne Veck Ltd  
Ascot Lloyd  
Berkshire Botanical  
Blenheim Palace  
Catesby Estates  
Chroma  
Eleos Compliance Ltd  
Freeths LLP  
Greencore Construction (Ssassy Property)  
Ipsen Biopharm Ltd

Johnson Matthey Plc  
Jordans Farms  
NatureBureau  
Primark  
RWE  
Sophos  
Southern Co-op  
St Annes College  
Tieva INC (Prodec Networks)  
University College Oxford  
Vale Brewery  
Vine House Farm

## **Major Donors**

Rose Dale  
Professor & Mrs Helm  
Mr & Mrs Tony Hill  
Jean & Roger Jefcoate CBE DL  
Liz Ware

## **Legators**

We are extremely grateful to the following people who left a bequest to Berkshire, Buckinghamshire & Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust in their Will:  
Peter Bozier  
Jackie Lewis-Leaning  
Bernice Mason  
Terence McAuliffe  
Geoffrey Ryder  
Raymond Shepherd

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



# Looking forward to 2023-24, our plans for the next year and beyond

As we move into the third year of our strategic plan we aim to build on the progress we have made towards nature's recovery.

## **Put Nature into Recovery**

We will continue to ensure our existing reserves are rich in wildlife and secure funding for delivery from both government grant schemes and independent grant providers. We will also focus on opportunities to expand our nature reserve holding through acquisitions funded by Biodiversity Net Gain. We will begin the operation of our second habitat bank, Ludgershall Habitat Bank in Buckinghamshire, and scope up to three more habitat banking sites.

Beyond our reserves, we will develop and fundraise for new landscape scale conservation projects in partnership with other key organisations, particularly in the Bernwood Forest and Ray Valley Living Landscape and Upper Thames Living Landscape. We will also partner with researchers to gain research insights into nature recovery challenges relevant to BBOWT.

## **Empower People to Act for Nature**

We will develop our training courses and networking events for community groups and BBOWT volunteers, and will provide a year-round programme of events for adults from all five education centres. We will deliver an Engaging with Nature project in the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead to promote nature connection, improve wellbeing and create space for nature.

Our Nextdoor Nature project will continue and we will complete the final year of our Rough Around the Edges and Chilterns Orchard projects. We will also develop and fundraise for new community projects in urban centres in partnership with other organisations, including Aylesbury and Maidenhead. We will support the development of the new statutory Local Nature Recovery Strategies in each county.

## **Secure our Future**

Over the next year we plan to embed a new approach to engagement with business, launch the Nature Recovery Fund, our ambitious fundraising campaign, and further grow membership of the Meles Circle and Legacy Society. We will embed digital membership recruitment and fundraising as part of our portfolio of fundraising methods.

We will develop our volunteer plan to establish the focus and capacity needs for our expanding team of volunteers, and will continue to develop and embed our EEDI strategy across the organisation to attract and retain diverse talent.

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



# Be part of **nature's recovery**

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

Thanks to the generosity of individuals, charitable trusts and businesses we are able to achieve our goals. Through their support, our experts work with more than 1,600 amazing volunteers to look after 85 nature reserves, five education centres and two visitor centres.

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



**Berkshire  
Buckinghamshire  
& Oxfordshire**  
Wildlife Trust



## **Contact us**

Estelle Bailey, Chief Executive  
[chiefexecutive@bbowt.org.uk](mailto:chiefexecutive@bbowt.org.uk)

## **Grants, trusts, individuals & major gifts**

[fundraising@bbowt.org.uk](mailto:fundraising@bbowt.org.uk)

## **Company support**

[partnerships@bbowt.org.uk](mailto:partnerships@bbowt.org.uk)

## **Legacies**

[legacies@bbowt.org.uk](mailto:legacies@bbowt.org.uk)

## **Volunteering**

[volunteering@bbowt.org.uk](mailto:volunteering@bbowt.org.uk)

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