

References

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— your wild life —



our strategy
2015-2020



Cheshire
Wildlife Trust

Cheshire Wildlife Trust is the only charity dedicated to the conservation of wildlife and wild places in the Cheshire region.

introduction

Formed in 1962 by volunteers, Cheshire Wildlife Trust is one of 47 independent charities which together form the UK wide Wildlife Trust movement. The Trust benefits from the support of over 13,000 members and 500 volunteers, is governed by a 13-strong Board of Trustees and currently employs over 30 dedicated staff. We are passionate about securing a future for local wildlife on land and sea, and also work as part of the Wildlife Trust movement to influence decision making for nature at the highest level nationally.

Our work is funded mainly by our membership, donations and grants. Our wholly owned subsidiary company, Cheshire Ecological Services, delivers commercial ecological consultancy work and gifts its profits to the Trust.

As a charity, our strength lies in the support of our members, donors and volunteers. By supporting Cheshire Wildlife Trust, you can do your bit for nature in the knowledge that you are helping conserve wildlife locally, on your doorstep. Our membership not only provides financial support but also the mandate to lobby for policy change. We continually strive to grow our membership and volunteer base so that we can deliver more for nature.

Cheshire is an area of great ecological and demographic diversity, no longer recognised as a single administrative area. Our patch stretches from the Dee and Mersey estuaries of the Wirral, across the Meres and Mosses landscape of the Cheshire plain to the Pennine fringes and large urban conurbations of South Manchester, Warrington and Halton.

**we want an environment
where wildlife can
move freely through
the landscape**

We want an environment where wildlife can move freely through the landscape; where wild places are valued, protected and well managed; where a healthy environment provides services to society; and where the next generation can enjoy a rich diversity of plants, animals and habitats near where they live. We cannot achieve this alone but by working with partner organisations, land managers, businesses and communities we can ensure nature's recovery.

We make space for local wildlife by managing our own nature reserves and influencing land management and decision making by others. We work with communities and particularly young people to create a connection with wildlife that ensures the value of nature to all our lives is not overlooked by the next generation. Our Living Landscape and Living Seas programmes drive our ambition to work in partnership with those who work our land and sea, along with policy makers, to create ecological networks for people and wildlife.

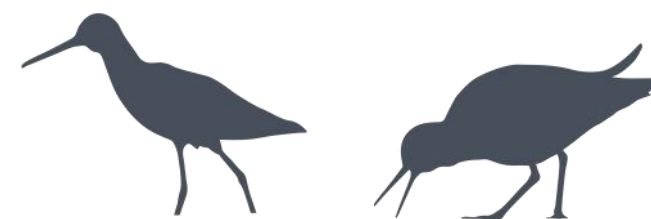
Taking a local approach sets us apart from many other conservation charities and you can be sure that by supporting Cheshire Wildlife Trust you are directly supporting wildlife conservation in your local area — wherever you live in the Cheshire region, you are no more than eight miles from a Cheshire Wildlife Trust nature reserve.

We are striving for nature's recovery within a generation and our 2015—2020 strategy sets out our contribution to this vision over the next five years. We have already achieved great success; managing 45 nature reserves, developing seven Living Landscape schemes and engaging thousands of people annually through our education and events programmes. Our strategy focuses our actions on the outcomes we believe will make a real and lasting difference to local wildlife.



Charlotte Harris
Chief Executive
September 2014

We've already made a strong commitment to engaging with the next generation through our education work at our Bickley Hall Farm headquarters



Our vision

In a generation, wildlife has more space to thrive and more local people value nature

We will achieve this by creating a **Living Landscape** and **securing Living Seas**. We want a **network** of more, bigger, better and healthier **spaces for wildlife** on land and sea. We want local people to be knowledgeable and passionate about nature and **take action** for wildlife and we want the needs of **wildlife to be valued in decision making** in balance with the needs of people.

Our purpose

To conserve and create space for local wildlife that is enjoyed and valued by all.

Our values

- We are passionate about securing a future for local wildlife on land and at sea
- We aim to meet the aspirations of our members, supporters and volunteers
- We act locally and influence nationally
- We lead by example and make decisions based on evidence
- We work in partnership to achieve our goals
- We are proactive, professional and pioneering
- We act pragmatically to secure the best outcome for wildlife
- We make sustainable choices

By 2020 our work will have **created more space for nature**. Wildlife will be **valued more highly** by local people and given greater consideration in decision making. By working locally for nature's recovery we will have inspired **more people to take action** for wildlife and secured **more resources** to deliver our vision.

Our outcomes

- 1 Space for wildlife is created and conserved
- 2 Wildlife is enjoyed and valued by all
- 3 Our funding is sustainable
- 4 We are an effective organisation

In this document, we set out the thinking behind each of our four outcomes and outline the actions needed to achieve them.



Water vole feeding: Ben Andrew



**By 2020 our work will
have created more
space for nature**

The water vole has already benefitted from work across our Living Landscape schemes, but challenges remain for this still-declining mammal across Cheshire

Outcome 1: Space for wildlife is created and conserved

Nature in the UK is in trouble, on land and at sea

Of those species studied, 60% have declined in the last 50 years and one in ten of all UK species is at risk of extinction within our shores¹. The UK picture is reflected locally with the habitats on which species depend in Cheshire in severe decline. We have lost 99% of our species-rich meadows since 1939 with 31% of the remaining grassland Local Wildlife Sites in West Cheshire lost in the last 15 years. Known as the ‘pond capital of Europe’, once home to 42,000 ponds, Cheshire now has just under 17,000 for these vital wetland stepping stones. We have also seen the loss and degradation of 99% of peatland habitats, diminishing carbon sinks and contributing to climate change. Added to this, Cheshire remains the least wooded area in England and at least 80% of our rivers currently do not meet the water quality standard for good ecological health².

Our ecosystems and the benefits we get from nature underpin our wellbeing and prosperity but are often undervalued in decision making. As a result, 30% of the services we get from our ecosystems, such as pollination and clean water, are in decline³, with future population growth set to exert more pressure on these systems.

The wildlife around our shores is particularly vulnerable to climate change, overfishing and other marine activities such as energy generation. The Wildlife Trusts successfully campaigned for legislation to protect marine wildlife by securing an ecological network at sea through the designation of ‘Marine Protected Areas’⁴. However, only a small proportion of our seas have so far been afforded any protection.

The UK is one of 190 countries worldwide with a commitment to urgently take action to halt the loss of biodiversity⁷. Conserving wildlife and ecosystems is internationally recognised as important to sustaining a healthy planet and maintaining the benefits people get from nature and the UK government has committed to halting the loss of biodiversity in England by 2020⁷.

We urgently need more, bigger, better and more connected spaces for nature on land and sea. We need to not only halt biodiversity loss but also reverse this decline and support nature’s recovery. Cheshire Wildlife Trust is well placed to respond to this challenge and to make a real difference to wildlife conservation locally.

Our ecosystems and the benefits we get from nature underpin our wellbeing

Protecting and restoring ‘core’ sites and boosting populations of declining species through targeted action remains an integral part of nature conservation, but this is not enough. We know that creating ecological networks is an effective way to not only help nature recover but to also restore the health of ecosystems and the benefits they provide to people such as clean water, food, healthy soils and climate regulation. Our current ecological networks and wildlife sites are failing to provide robust and resilient

spaces for nature that are capable of adapting to pressures such as climate change, intensive farming and development⁵. Following a campaign led by environmental organisations including the Wildlife Trusts, integrated landscape-scale conservation is now recognised in government policy and has given rise to the formation of the Cheshire region Local Nature Partnership and designation of Nature Improvement Areas⁶.

Cheshire Wildlife Trust has embraced the shift towards an integrated landscape-scale approach through our Living Landscape and Living Seas programmes. We have been working at a landscape scale since 2008 and have so far progressed seven Living Landscape⁸ schemes and continue to campaign for a network of Marine Conservation Zones in the Irish Sea. We have also seen our efforts to secure core sites rewarded with 80% of the land we manage in favourable or recovering condition, and our involvement in local partnership projects has seen the return of dormice and the white-faced darter dragonfly. Species such as the water vole, barn owl and otter have also benefited from targeted conservation action within our Living Landscape schemes.

Male white-faced darter: Dave Kitching

“The threats to the UK’s wildlife are many and varied, the most severe act either to destroy valuable habitat or degrade the quality and value of what remains. We should act to save nature both for its intrinsic value and for the benefits it brings to us that are essential to our wellbeing and prosperity.

State of Nature, 2013

The white-faced darter dragonfly last bred successfully in Cheshire in 2003. We’re now leading on its re-introduction to Delamere Forest in a first for the region



What is an Ecological Network?

An ecological network consists of core sites between which buffer zones and wildlife corridors, along with sympathetic management of the whole environment, enable the movement of species through the landscape. Ecological networks need to function at varying scales to meet the needs of different species. The components of an ecological network are:

Core sites: Areas of high nature conservation value such as protected wildlife sites and habitats supporting high concentrations of species.

Corridors and stepping stones: A number of small sites containing a mosaic of habitats which enable species to move between core sites.

Restoration areas: Areas where creation or restoration of high quality habitats is planned to link up or enhance existing core sites.

Buffer zones: Areas which surround core sites offering protection from adverse impacts in the wider environment.

Sustainable use areas: Surrounding land that is managed sustainably and in a wildlife friendly way which enables species to move more freely through the landscape.

1.1**New spaces for wildlife are created**

We need more space for nature and a net gain for biodiversity from decision making. To create more space for wildlife we will influence planning decisions to secure new habitat through biodiversity offsetting and mitigation schemes. We will work with land managers to influence agri-environment schemes. We will promote new habitat creation in community spaces and create new habitat in the spaces between existing wildlife sites.

1.2**Spaces for wildlife are better protected and better managed**

We need to look after what's left. We will ensure that our 'core sites' such as nature reserves, Local Wildlife Sites and nationally protected areas are managed in a way that promotes wildlife recovery. We will influence policy decisions to secure better protection for wildlife and wildlife sites.

1.3**More declining species are recovering**

We know that 60% of species are in decline and that one in ten is at risk of extinction in the UK. Through the creation of Living Landscapes, management of core sites and targeted species projects we will help species recover.

1.4**Healthy ecological networks support nature's benefits to people**

Creating a Living Landscape and securing Living Seas brings benefits to society as well as nature. We will support and where appropriate, lead the creation of ecological networks, not just for wildlife but also for the wide range of ecosystems services they can provide.

1.5**Science and evidence are used more effectively to underpin our work**

Where evidence exists, we will aim to make informed decisions based on robust scientific data that enables us to target our efforts more effectively. We will strive to understand the effects of our actions and share and learn from best practice. We will work in partnership with academic institutions to increase the use of science and evidence in our work.

At Gowy Meadows, our own Longhorn cattle graze 165ha of floodplain meadow, creating wildlife habitats and enhancing flood defences for nearby industry.

We need to look after what's left.

We will ensure that our 'core sites' such as nature reserves, Local Wildlife Sites and nationally protected areas are managed in a way that promotes wildlife recovery.



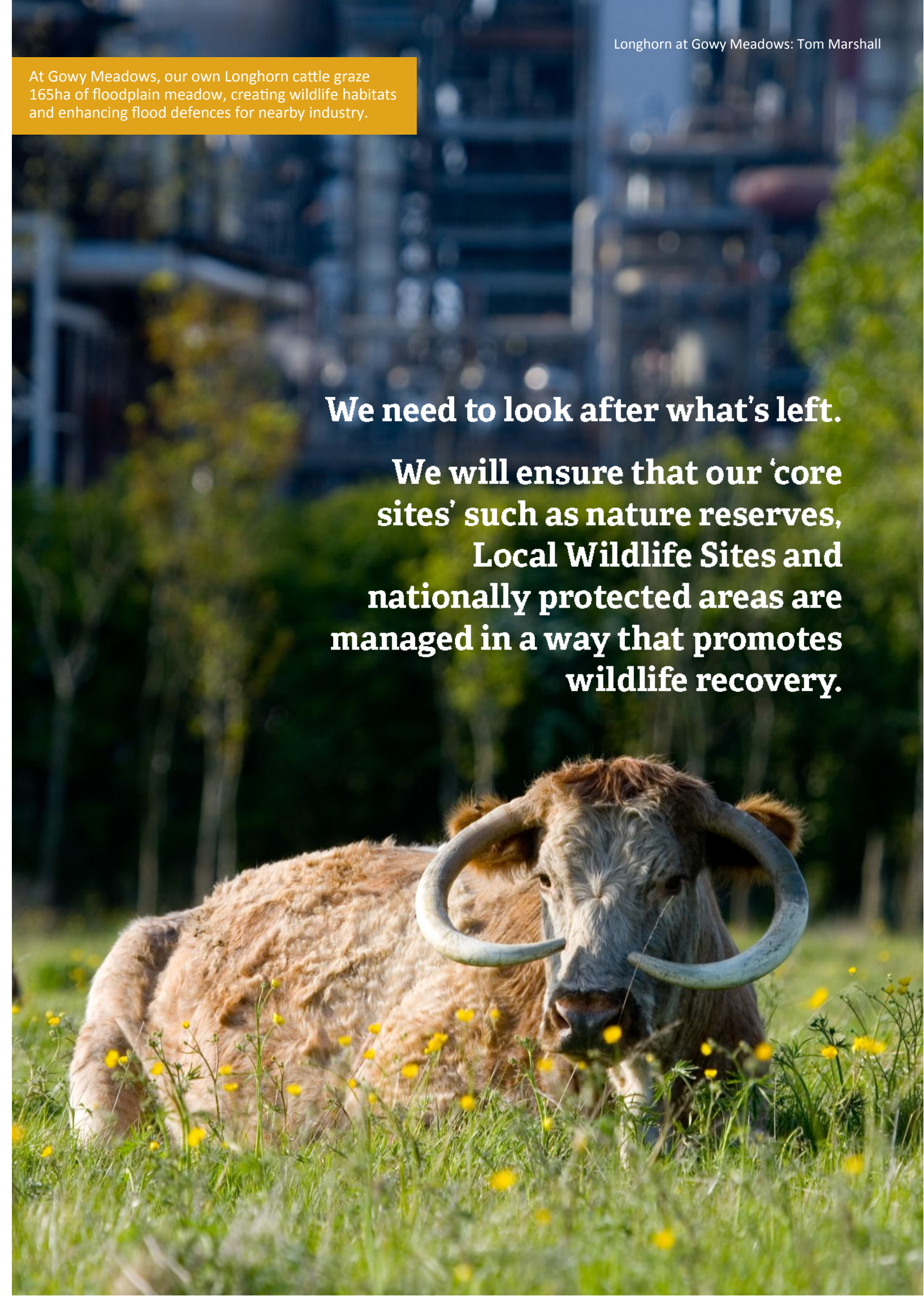
What are ecosystem services?

Supporting Services: Healthy ecosystems made up of diverse and thriving plant and animal communities and ecosystem processes such as water and mineral cycling provide the basis on which all other benefits we get from nature are derived.

Provisioning Services: Nature provides us with food, drinking water and energy.

Regulating Services: A healthy natural environment regulates flooding, waste breakdown, climate, disease and pollination.





Cultural Services: People enjoy spending time outdoors and nature provides meaningful places for us to visit, take part in recreational activities and gain spiritual enrichment.





How do we value nature?

Nature matters to every single one of us and to society. We can value nature as follows:

-  **Intrinsic value:** It is our moral duty to protect nature for its own sake and for future generations.
-  **Emotional value:** People connect with nature on an emotional level through music, literature and art. We can often feel a strong connection with and love for wildlife and wild spaces.
-  **Societal value:** Nature is valued for the benefits it brings to our lives such as protection from flooding, places to enjoy, food and improved health.
-  **Financial value:** Nature provides goods and materials as well as impacting on the economy in other ways such as influencing house prices and tourism.

Outcome 2: Wildlife is enjoyed and valued by all

Nature matters to every single one of us, but no one will protect what they don't care about and no one will care about what they have never experienced.

Saving nature is in our hands. Nature is in trouble because society fails to value its benefits highly enough. A recent MORI poll found that public concern for the environment was at a 20 year low with results placing the environment 21st on the Issues Index. There is an increasing gap between people and nature. At the end of the 20th century, almost 90% of people in Britain lived in urban areas. Today, less than one in ten children now play in wild places compared to almost half of children a generation ago¹³.

The natural environment is critically important to our wellbeing and economy; however, it is consistently undervalued in decision making and by society. Drivers such as the need for more housing, better transport networks, industrial development and cheaper food have all contributed to nature's decline. We have to ensure that the decisions we make lead to the recovery of nature, not further degradation and loss.

A healthy natural environment underpins a strong economy. Our 'Natural Capital'⁶ is the foundation on which our economy, society and prosperity is built. We know that business investment and house prices in areas of high quality environment are higher¹¹, however, the value of our natural capital is routinely taken for granted in decision making. A healthy natural environment is also an essential part of our own health and wellbeing. Nature provides benefits such as food, water, energy, clean air and beautiful places to visit.

only one in five of today's 8-12 year olds have a regular meaningful connection to the natural world

We need wider support if conservation efforts are to succeed. More people need to feel a deeper connection to the natural world and that includes making sure that the next generation grow up having experienced wild places. To realise this ambition we will raise the profile of wildlife conservation and our work and provide opportunities for people to get involved in their local environment across the Cheshire region. We will grow support for wildlife conservation through increasing our membership both in number and diversity. We value our members and volunteers and will support them through clear communications, opportunities to get involved, access to special events and wildlife advice to foster a lifelong commitment to wildlife conservation.

We believe that connecting with wildlife should be a natural part of childhood. A recent study showed that only one in five of today's 8—12 year olds have a regular meaningful connection to the natural world⁹ and we know that far fewer children now play regularly outdoors compared to those in the 1970s¹⁰. Children who connect with wildlife are much more likely to become adults who value nature. This connection is not only important for society but also for the health and wellbeing of young people.

Around 30% of 11—15 year olds are obese and it is predicted that by 2050 over half of the adult population will be overweight at the same time that mental illness is on the increase¹⁰. Taking part in physical activity outdoors is one way to tackle this problem. Studies show that connecting with nature through your local green space is beneficial to both physical and mental wellbeing¹¹ and could save the NHS as much as £2.1 billion per year in England alone. Connecting with nature can even help you live longer¹⁰.

For nature to recover, we need society to recognise the interdependence we have with the natural world and the consequences to us all of neglecting it. Through our work we will encourage people to think differently about nature and help restore the lost connection felt by children. By influencing decision makers we will aim to reduce the pressures on Cheshire's natural environment.





We're bringing Forest Schools to young people across Cheshire; helping to tackle health and behavioural challenges with this innovative outdoor approach



2.1

Families and children are more passionate about wildlife

We want every child in the Cheshire region to experience Wild Time¹² and feel a deep connection with the natural world. Inspiring the next generation is the key to building a future society which cares for nature. We will inspire children through environmental education, Wildlife Watch clubs and family events.

2.2

More people take action for wildlife

We will inspire and support people to take action for wildlife through opportunities to get involved with helping nature on their doorstep whether it be through volunteering, wildlife gardening, campaigning for change or becoming a member. We will support our members by providing advice and access to special events and publications.

2.3

More people visit the coast and countryside and experience wildlife

We will provide high quality opportunities for our members and the public to experience wildlife first hand, through events and access to our nature reserves.

2.4

The benefits we get from nature are better understood and valued

We need society to recognise that we all depend on nature for our wellbeing and prosperity. We will campaign for the true value of nature to society to be recognised and to place nature centre stage in society.

2.5

More decisions affecting nature take account of its value and secure benefits for wildlife

We cannot secure nature's recovery alone. We will join forces with a wide range of partners to achieve our vision, working with landowners, farmers, businesses, public bodies, other charities and communities. By working in partnership we will influence decision makers to secure the best deal for wildlife and maximise the impact of our work. We will strive for nature to be at the heart of decision making.

Outcome 3: Our funding is sustainable

Cheshire Wildlife Trust is a growing organisation supported by a strong membership base, corporate supporters and grant giving bodies. Maintaining diverse income streams has enabled the Trust to thrive even through tough economic times when other charities have closed their doors for good. To deliver the ambitions of this strategy we need to continue to grow our resources in a way which secures our financial future.

There is significant room for our membership and other sources of unrestricted income to grow, providing not only valuable support but greater financial sustainability and independence. Grants will need to remain an important income stream; however, increased unrestricted income will allow less reliance on short term funding supporting core work.



As we grow, working efficiently will ensure that as much of our supporters' money as possible is spent on delivering our charitable objectives. Today (2015), for every £1 donated to us 99p is spent in Cheshire and we spend 88p in every £1 directly on our conservation and community engagement work. The remainder supports our UK office to deliver national lobbying and communications work and organisational overheads such as rent, utilities and insurance.

To ensure that we spend our resources wisely, we will need to plan effectively. This strategy will be used to drive an integrated approach to our business and financial planning that ensures the sound stewardship of our assets and resources.

3.1

We are financially sustainable and independent

We will grow our unrestricted funding sources and financial reserves to ensure we are less dependent on short term grant funding for core work. In particular, we will grow our membership and broaden our supporter base.

3.2

Our financial and business planning processes are fully integrated

We will ensure that we plan ahead to make sure that our resources remain focused on delivering our priority work.

3.3

We are good stewards of our assets and resources

We will take pride in looking after our land, buildings and equipment. We will carefully consider investments in new assets to ensure we get best value from our available resources.

3.4

As we grow, more of our supporters' money is spent directly on delivering our purpose

We will ensure that the amount we spend on necessary overheads is closely managed to make sure that as much of our supporters' money as possible is spent on our charitable activities of conserving nature and engaging communities.

3.5

There is more financial support for wildlife conservation

We will seek to annually increase our income by growing membership and donor support, maintaining a wide diversity of income sources and utilising grants to deliver project work.

Outcome 4: We are an effective organisation

An organisation’s effectiveness can be measured both externally in terms of its profile and reputation and internally through the efficacy of its systems, processes and use of resources. Cheshire Wildlife Trust needs to ensure that we achieve the outcomes of this strategy in the most effective way by carefully choosing how and where we focus our resources.

The world around us is constantly changing —politically, socially, economically and environmentally. Our new strategy responds to recent changes and sets out how we can best contribute to nature’s recovery.

Our staff structure and performance management culture will ensure that we remain focused on delivering priority work. We will continue to invest in our staff and volunteers to grow the experts of the future and ensure that everyone has the opportunity to improve their knowledge and skills during their time with us. We will continue to develop a culture where all staff uphold our values and behaviours. We will work collaboratively with other wildlife trusts and our partners to build and share skills and knowledge to make effective use of our resources.

Effective governance arrangements are essential for timely and appropriate decision making. We will ensure that our systems and processes are fit for purpose and that our governance arrangements support the execution of this strategy and provide the mechanism for robust evaluation and review of our work. The Trust is governed by a board of dedicated Trustees, each serving a defined term and recruited for the specialist skills they can offer. We will ensure that the Board remains effective by conducting regular board appraisals, skills audits and through recruitment of high calibre replacements.

For the Trust to retain current supporters and attract new supporters we need to communicate the impact of our work and grow and strengthen our brand. By communicating our work using a broad range of media we will inspire more people to value nature. Our supporters are vital to the success of the Trust and we value their views. We will look to continually improve member satisfaction and retention rates and to position the Trust as the ‘go to’ local wildlife organisation. We will seek regular feedback from our members to ensure that our work continues to meet their aspirations and we will strive to create a membership offer that is rewarding and relevant to a wide range of people.

We are proud to be part of the Wildlife Trust movement and will continue to contribute to the movement’s mission to create a Living Landscape and secure Living Seas. We will share knowledge and support best practice across the movement. We will work collaboratively with other wildlife trusts where this will create a bigger impact or more efficient use of resources than working alone.



BBC filming: Tom Marshall

Working with the media remains vital in getting our messages to a wider audience



Tom Marshall

4.1 We focus our work on our strategic priorities and values

All staff, team and project work plans will be aligned to achieving our strategic outcomes. We expect our staff behaviour to reflect our values and this will be given equal importance to the work we deliver.

4.2 Our staff and volunteers feel valued and well supported

We will carry out annual appraisals with our staff and encourage their personal and professional development. We will provide inductions to all staff and volunteers and ensure they work within a supportive management culture.

4.3 We are the ‘go to’ local wildlife organisation

We will continually raise the profile and reputation of the Trust and our work, using a wide range of media tools, so we become the natural choice for people looking for advice or wanting to support nature conservation locally.

4.4 Our processes and systems are fit for purpose, well used and understood

We will ensure that our ways of working are efficient and effective and that our staff are trained and supported in using systems and processes to aid the smooth running of the Trust.

4.5 Our governance structure delivers effective and timely decision making

We will ensure that our board and committee meetings are well run with regular appraisal of their membership and effectiveness.

4.6 Our work and achievements are well communicated and understood

We will produce high quality print and electronic communications to reach a wide range of audiences. We will also communicate our work to specialist audiences through talks, production of case studies, presentations at seminars and conferences and where appropriate, by publishing our findings.

4.7 We achieve greater impact by being part of the Wildlife Trust movement

We will work cooperatively with other local Wildlife Trusts and support the work of our central charity, RSWT. We will contribute to the success, growth and recognition of The Wildlife Trust movement by supporting the development and implementation of collective thinking and the delivery of campaigns and best practice locally.