



our year

— OUR WILD LIVES —

ANNUAL REVIEW 2014–2015
CHESHIRE WILDLIFE TRUST



my motivation

—CHARLOTTE HARRIS, CHIEF EXECUTIVE,
CHESHIRE WILDLIFE TRUST —

A lifelong love of wildlife has seen Charlotte dedicate her career to conservation and she has spent the past decade working for Cheshire Wildlife Trust, engaging people in the natural world and working to protect vulnerable species and habitats.

In her former role as Director of Conservation, Charlotte set up the Trust's Living Landscape conservation projects across the Cheshire region and now, as Chief Executive, is the driving force behind the Trust's vision to create and conserve more space for wildlife for people to value and enjoy.

Welcome

This annual review marks the start of an exciting time of change for Cheshire Wildlife Trust as this is the year we took the first steps towards realising our new strategic vision – to give wildlife more space to thrive and help more people value nature.

Launched at our 2014 Annual General Meeting, our 2015–2020 strategy builds on the foundations of our work over the past half century and refocuses our vision to respond to the challenges facing nature today.

Nature is in trouble, and for it to recover society needs to value it more highly. This is why we now place an equal emphasis on our conservation and people engagement work, and why you'll learn more about some of the people behind our projects – from staff to volunteers – in this annual review.

Over the past 12 months we've continued our Living Landscape schemes, restoring and recreating habitats on a large scale, and have stepped up our marine work as members of the Living Seas North West network of Wildlife Trusts. We've also continued working in partnership with local councils and businesses to deliver benefits for nature through a range of projects across the Cheshire region.

Our education work has expanded, in no small part thanks to the opening of our new centre at Bickley Hall Farm, and our Forest Schools and Nature Tots programmes have grown significantly, giving more young people the chance to connect with nature.

The launch of the national My Wild Life campaign and our new Natural Futures volunteering project have helped us to reach us to more people than ever before, providing us with opportunities to work with new groups of people and take our message to a wider audience.

We've reshaped our conservation and fundraising teams to rise to the environmental and financial challenges ahead and have created a new Ecology and Planning team to lead on responses to planning applications and give wildlife advice.

We've also set up a four-strong team dedicated to delivering the Natural Futures project so that we can help more people to do more for wildlife across the county.

However, we face tough times ahead. Nature remains in decline and the instruments we use to do our work are under threat – a review of European Union directives could see a weakening of the legal framework protecting nature and austerity measures continue to reduce the availability of grant funding.

This is why we need your support more than ever. As members you are a vital collective voice for nature, not only providing financial support, but also our mandate to lobby for change.

We can't do what we set out to achieve without you, so thank you for taking action for nature by supporting us.

Charlotte Harris,
Chief Executive, Cheshire Wildlife Trust

Making space for nature

Over the past year our large scale Living Landscape projects – Gowy and Mersey Washland, and Delamere Sandscape – continued to successfully create more space for nature.

We're delighted that otters continue to thrive along the River Gowy thanks to the Gowy Connect project – out of 23 sites surveyed for otters, 65% showed their presence.

This ambitious project has seen us carry on our work with 15 landowners who have been helping us to restore, recreate or reconnect wildlife habitats using natural links such as rivers and hedgerows.

The challenges facing the magnificent barn owl were outlined in our latest appeal and we are thrilled they are nesting at Gowy Meadows thanks to the way we manage their hunting habitat – work that we can continue now thanks to your support.

Our Delamere Lost Mosses project continues to be a success and restoration works have seen the green hairstreak butterfly return to peatland areas within the forest, while our white-faced darter dragonfly reintroduction programme continues to attract huge local support as well media attention – it will feature in the autumn series of ITV's *Countrywise*.

This year also saw us complete our Bringing Bluebells Back project which saw this beautiful wildflower return to 10 Cheshire woodlands, creating a series of stunning sapphire carpets for visitors to enjoy during the spring.

Partnership work has allowed us to continue work at a landscape scale, notably through the new Saltscap Landscape Partnership Scheme in the Weaver Valley which sees us giving conservation advice to landowners, working with local primary school children, and delivering projects to help to protect water voles.

We also continue to be involved in the Meres and Mosses Nature Improvement Area in south Cheshire, and in the Great Manchester Wetlands, and remain an active board member of the Cheshire region Local Nature Partnership which allows us to influence how the natural environment should be taken into consideration in local decision making.

57 transects walked in Delamere

19 dragonfly and damselfly species recorded in Delamere

20km of the River Gowy surveyed for otters

1,200m of hedgerow planted or restored as part of Gowy Connect project



White-faced darter dragonfly - Katie Piercy
Otter - Elliot Smith



—HUW ROWLANDS, LANDOWNER, THE GRANGE FARM —

Wildlife friendly farming is in the blood for Huw, whose family has run The Grange Farm in Mickle Trafford since the 1940s.

An early supporter of our Gowy and Mersey Washlands Living Landscapes scheme, he's been a key part of our conservation grazing project and believes in farming in a way that complements the land to ensure the very best for nature.



my first love

— RICHARD GARDNER, CONSERVATION MANAGER EAST,
CHESHIRE WILDLIFE TRUST —

After training as a conservationist, but then pursuing a career in national and local government, Richard returned to his first love eight years ago, spending as much time as possible outdoors with binoculars and magnifying glasses learning all about birds, bugs and flowers.

Volunteering then gave him the experience needed to secure his first job in conservation. Now, he's still wild – managing nature reserves, developing landscape-scale projects, vaccinating badgers, surveying habitats – and has never looked back.

Making space for nature

We've continued to deliver our badger vaccination programme, work which influenced Defra's Badger Edge Vaccination Scheme (BEVS) to support vaccination projects in areas outside the bovine TB high risk area. We supported four local country estates in developing their own landscape scale vaccination scheme which resulted in Cholmondeley, Eaton, Peckforton and Bolesworth estates making the first successful BEVS application.

In Wirral one of Cheshire's rarest and perhaps most vocal species, the natterjack toad, had another successful year, making full use of the new scrapes created on the coast at our Red Rocks Nature Reserve, where thousands of toadlets were born this season.

Our conservation officers carried on our work with local councils to identify, monitor and give management advice for Local Wildlife Sites and our Ecology and Planning team has worked with a number of local communities on their Neighbourhood Plans.

These plans are designed to give people more control over the development of their local area and we've been giving advice on ways to make sure that biodiversity is a key part of the process so that we can get the best result for wildlife and the local community.

Our first Living Seas officer was appointed this year who helped us lobby for greater protection of our marine environment. There are now two Marine Conservation Zones in the Irish Sea but that's nowhere near enough to create an ecological network so we will keep pushing for this as consultations enter a third tranche in the year ahead.

We also stepped up our work on the Wirral coastline, holding a range of community awareness events at Thurstaston Beach where we created some incredible art from marine litter with Shore Cottage Studio.

We've also run a series of 'Shoresearch' surveys along the coast, and will continue our education and community work into the year ahead with our Love My Estuary project which aims to encourage people to think about how their actions can impact upon the coastal environment.

99 badgers treated with BCG vaccine across **1,336ha** of land

13 natterjack toad spawn strings discovered in pools at our coastal reserve



Badger - Tom Marshall
Natterjack toad - Philip Precey

Educating a new generation

Education is a fundamental part of what we do now, and today's children and young people will play a vital role in our environment's future.

It's hard to believe, but only one in 10 children play in wild places today compared to 50% a generation ago. We believe that connecting with nature should be a significant part of childhood which is why we want to inspire youngsters about the natural world around them.

Each year we provide a whole range of educational activities for children and young people and in 2014 we inspired over 2,500 children through our work in schools and at events across the county.

Our new education centre at Bickley Hall Farm has been a fantastic asset to the Trust, enabling our People and Wildlife team to welcome children to the farm all year round, come rain or shine. It also provides a great base for training courses, conferences and meetings. This year alone it allowed us to run 14 events, training days and conferences, plus it also served as a touring theatre venue for a new play, *The Common*.

Our Forest Schools programme expanded to include work with children at risk of exclusion where contact with nature can have a direct impact on their behaviour and learning capacity, and a Heritage Lottery Fund grant ensured that we could continue offering our ever popular Nature Tots, aimed at the under 5s, for free.

This year we also saw the completion of our biodiversity traineeship programme, which was run in partnership with RECORD and Chester Zoo.

Over four years graduates were given practical training and work experience during this Heritage Lottery Fund Skills for the Future programme which helped to support conservationists of the future.

Meanwhile, our first cohort of Delamere volunteer trainees completed their placements on our Delamere's Dragons and Delamere's Lost Mosses projects, and we welcomed a second group of trainees to carry on their work.

We also continued to support students from local further education colleges and universities by providing short and long term work experience placements at the Trust.

26 schools and 609 children made use of our Bickley Barn Education Centre

12 graduates in total completed our biodiversity traineeship



Working with children - Tom Marshall
Nature Tots - Tom Marshall



my
reason to be

— SASHA HOLLINGWORTH, PEOPLE AND WILDLIFE ASSISTANT,
CHESHIRE WILDLIFE TRUST —

Living on a farm and having an outdoor, free-range childhood, Sasha was obsessed with nature and the outdoors from an early age and is now passionate about getting other children outdoors to experience nature first hand.

As a Forest School Practitioner she wants to encourage and inspire children to get outdoors and have fun whilst all the time developing their nature skills and knowledge.



my higher education

—DR JENNIFER WOOD, VOLUNTEER,
CHESHIRE WILDLIFE TRUST NORTH GROUP —

Retired university social work lecturer and Trustee, Jennifer has been a member of our North Group for around eight years, helping to maintain the Trust's Carrington Moss reserves – in particular Brookheys Covert, an ancient woodland on the edge of an urban setting in Altrincham.

With a second degree in ecology, caring for her local wildlife gives her the chance to increase her personal conservation knowledge but also allows her to preserve local wild spaces and create a living legacy for her grandchildren.

Connecting communities

In March 2015 we were delighted to learn our Natural Futures volunteering project was successful in its application to the Heritage Lottery Fund.

This exciting new project will allow us to make a £1.2 million investment in volunteering over the next four years, changing both the face of the Trust and the future of wildlife and natural spaces in Cheshire for the better.

The aim of this project is to get more people doing more for nature in the Cheshire region and with the Natural Futures team now in place we can give added support and training to our existing army of volunteers, and target new audiences to help with current work and new projects.

In return volunteers will benefit from learning new skills, being part of a vibrant network and improving their health and well-being.

Our successful local groups also continue to be a huge part of our work, delivering inspiring talks and experiences for the public. Volunteer work carried out at New Ferry Butterfly Park by our Wirral Group resulted in another 'Green Flag' award for the park, which celebrated its 20th anniversary this year, plus a Pollinator Champion of Champions Award.

We also widened our reach this year by delivering an inspiring programme of events, from public speakers to guided walks.

More than 600 people attended our Open Farm Sunday event in June, while hundreds of wildlife and gardening fans enjoyed an evening with Bill Oddie in March and Bob Flowerdew in May.

19 walks and talks were organised by the Trust

1,280 people were engaged through outreach visits



Clockwise, from top left:
Delamere volunteers - Heather Hulse
Marbury volunteers - Beth Alvey
Open Farm Sunday - Gemma Sproston
Bob Flowerdew - Ron Thomas

Cheshire Ecological Services

Cheshire Ecological Services (CES), our consultancy arm, continues to thrive as one of the leading independent consultancies in the North West.

A vital supporter of the Trust's conservation work over the past year, in 2015 this small but dedicated team of experts expanded to welcome a graduate trainee into the fold.

Foundations laid in the previous year as part of CES's relationship with Chester Zoo came to fruition this year as the zoo's development 'The Islands' officially opened to the public.

In the lead up to this major project, which is part of the zoo's 'Natural Vision' scheme, the CES team undertook a great crested newt capture and relocation project. Some 1,500 specimens were captured, including 1,000 great crested newts.

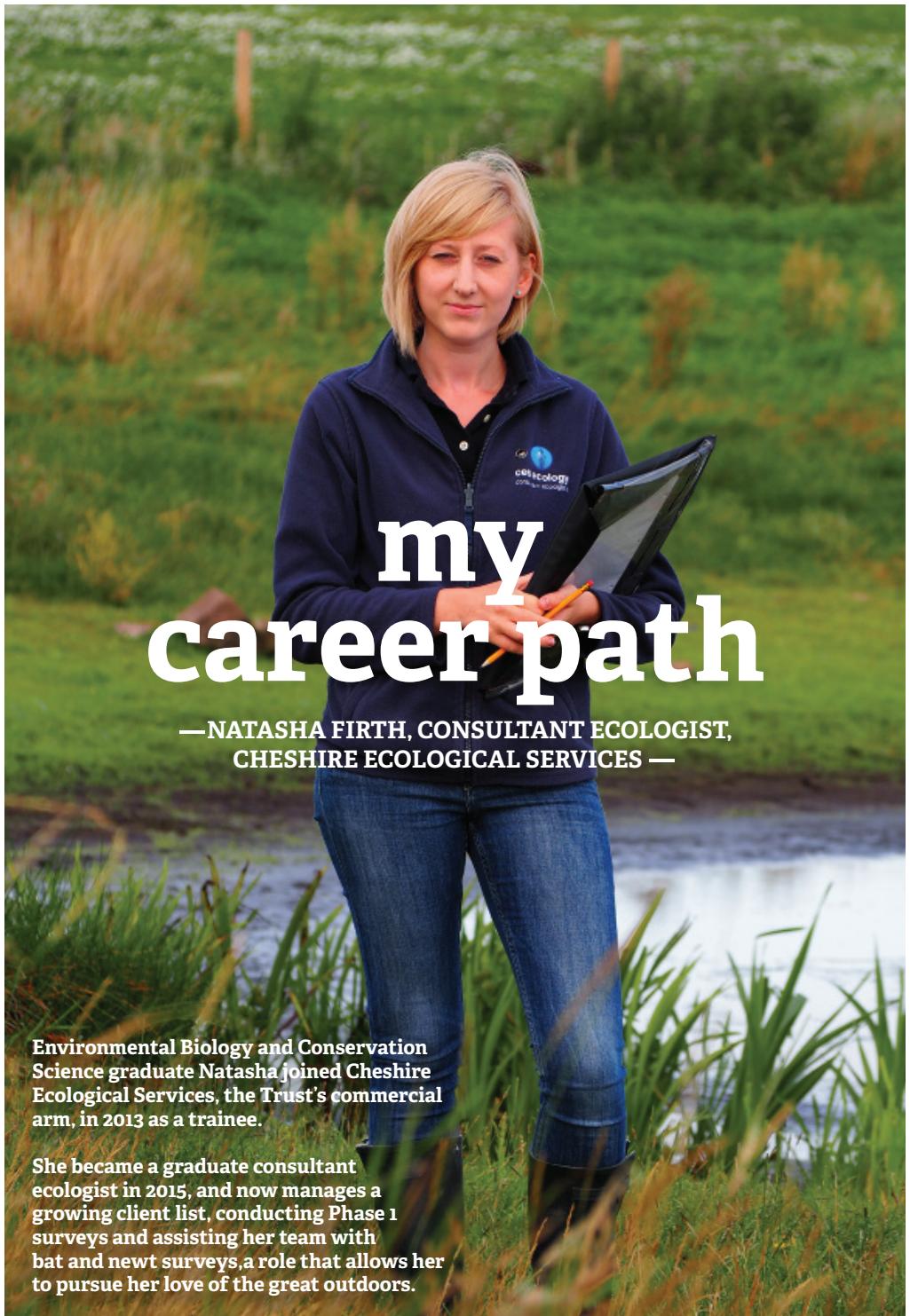
Work at major retail sites such as Cheshire Oaks retail remains successful, with the great crested newt population at this Ellesmere Port location continuing to thrive, while CES's work at Cheshire Business Park for Bank of America and Chester Business Park Management Company has resulted in the great crested newt reaching 'large' population size class, which is highly unusual in Cheshire.

CES also continues to work with a number of local house builders, such as Jones Homes, Bloor and David Wilson Homes, to generate positive outcomes for wildlife including bats, barn owl and water voles.

1,500 specimens captured and relocated as part of Chester Zoo's The Islands development



Great crested newt - Jim Grundy
Barn Owl - Natalie Webb

A full-page photograph of a woman, Natasha Firth, standing in a lush green field with a pond in the background. She is wearing a dark blue jacket with a logo and jeans, holding a clipboard and a pen. The text 'my career path' is overlaid in large white letters, followed by her name and title in smaller white text. At the bottom, there is a short biography of her career path.

my career path

—NATASHA FIRTH, CONSULTANT ECOLOGIST,
CHESHIRE ECOLOGICAL SERVICES —

Environmental Biology and Conservation Science graduate Natasha joined Cheshire Ecological Services, the Trust's commercial arm, in 2013 as a trainee.

She became a graduate consultant ecologist in 2015, and now manages a growing client list, conducting Phase 1 surveys and assisting her team with bat and newt surveys, a role that allows her to pursue her love of the great outdoors.

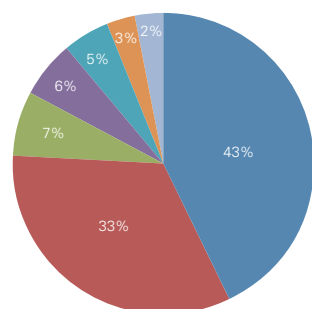
Finances

These charts give an illustration of Cheshire Wildlife Trust's income and expenditure for the year 2014–15. The full audited accounts and the Trustees report can be obtained from Cheshire Wildlife Trust, Bickley Hall Farm, Malpas, SY14 8EF or from www.cheshirewildlifetrust.org.uk

Income

Grants
Membership
Gifts and other donations
Conservation services
Subsidiary company profits
Other sales
Education services

£615,009
£475,569
£107,168
£87,347
£71,641
£50,082
£26,491
£1,433,307

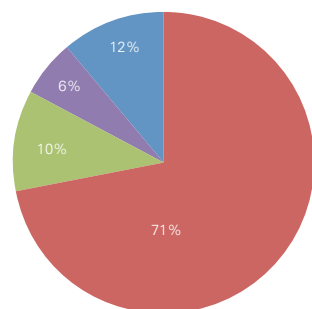


Grants
Membership
Gifts and other donations
Conservation services
Subsidiary company profits
Other sales
Education services

Expenditure

Conservation project and nature reserves
Education & community engagement
Membership services
Costs of generating other income

£1,031,172
£176,486
£151,580
£92,244
£1,451,482



Education & community engagement
Membership services
Costs of generating other income
Conservation & nature reserves

Thank you

Cheshire Wildlife Trust is a charitable organisation whose work depends on the goodwill, financial support and voluntary input of individuals, businesses, public bodies, partner charities and a number of charitable trusts and foundations.



We are grateful to the following for their financial support through donations, grants and sponsorship:

Platinum Members

MAN Diesel & Turbo, URENCO.

Gold Members

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Standard Members

Ashley & Dumville Publishing Group Ltd, Chester Golf Club, Custom Powders Ltd, Eaton Golf Course, Lafarge Tarmac Ltd, Sanofi UK, Sibelco UK.

Our grateful thanks also go to:

Vernons Plant Hire Ltd, British Dragonfly Society, Sprayway Ltd, Befesa Salt Slags Ltd, Delamere Cafe, Bank of America Merrill Lynch, SHB Vehicle Hire UK, Christine Langley, Cotebrook Shire Horse Centre.

And: The Linley Shaw Foundation, The William Dean Foundation

Legacies

We would like to express our sincere thanks and gratitude to the following generous individuals who left legacies to the Trust in the last year: Elizabeth Joan Lawrence and Alan Taylor



my future

—NIC JEFFRIES, AGRICULTURE STUDENT,
REASEHEATH COLLEGE —

A love of farming from an early age led Nic to studying agriculture at college which resulted in her joining the Trust on a work experience placement early in 2015.

During her time at Bickley Hall Farm she's gained lots of hands-on experience working with our conservation herds of dexters and longhorn cattle and Hebridean sheep, but has also been able to share her considerable knowledge with the Farm and Gowry team, all setting her up nicely for when she heads to America next year where she plans to work on a cattle ranch.

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Cheshire

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