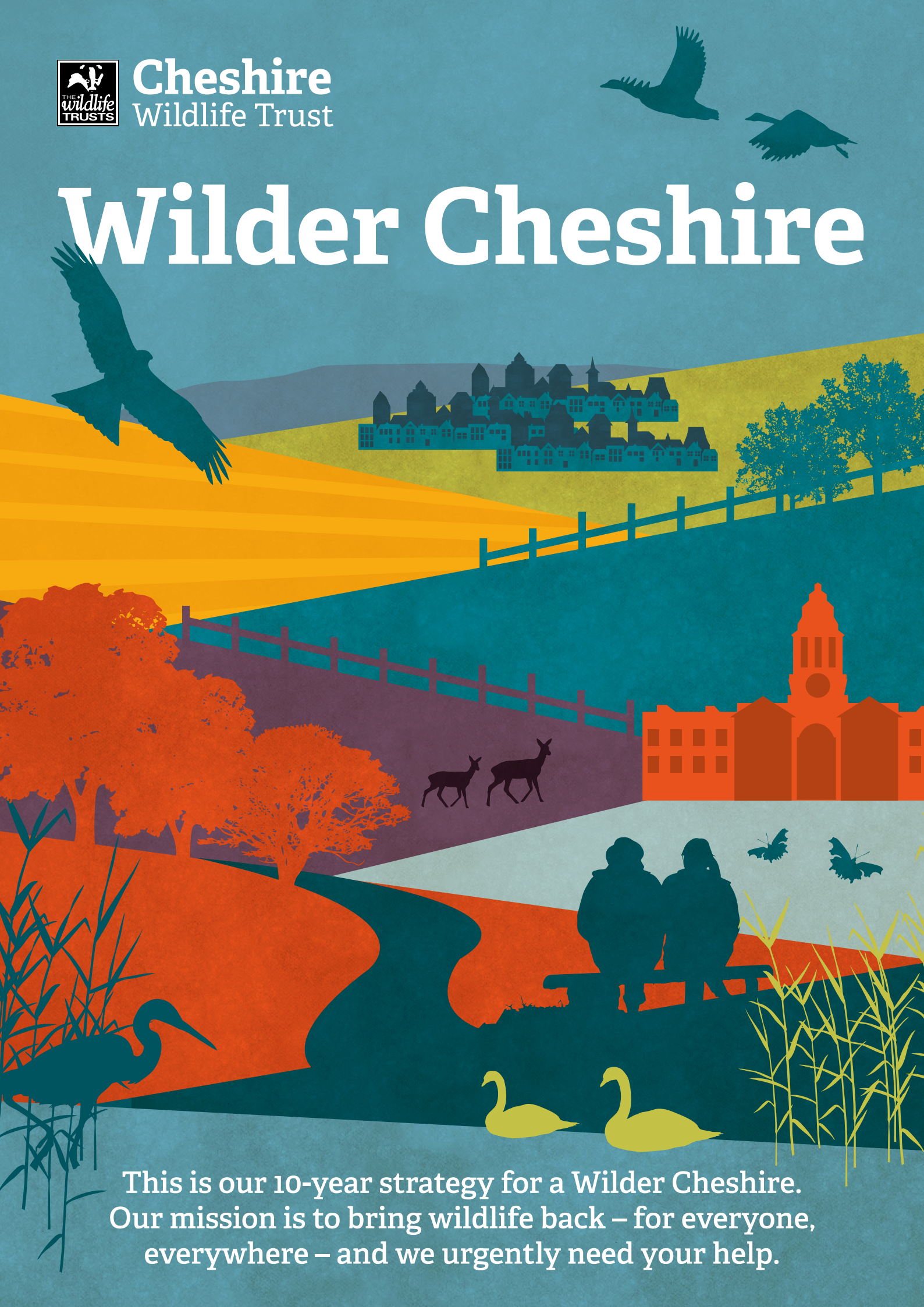




Cheshire
Wildlife Trust

Wilder Cheshire



This is our 10-year strategy for a Wilder Cheshire.
Our mission is to bring wildlife back – for everyone,
everywhere – and we urgently need your help.

The time to act is now. We have to fix the crisis. Let's bring wildlife back.

We have reached a tipping point. By 2030, we must see nature recovering, wildlife returning and ecosystems restored. We can't defer, we can't wait for more data or better reasons to act. The evidence is already there and we know what to do. If we delay, the damage will be irreversible. If we wait until the impacts of environmental breakdown are upon us – that is, until we witness the rising sea levels, personally suffer the effects of pollution or notice the lack of birdsong – it will be too late.

Putting nature into recovery must be what we turn all our efforts to now – it has to be the priority.

It won't be easy. This is a complex challenge and the next 10 years will be just the start, but we can do it.

WILDLIFE IS IN CRISIS **Let's fight for wildlife's recovery.**

At least 30% of the land and sea in the UK needs to be managed for nature so that missing wildlife will return. We want to see more and better connected wild spaces and the pressures on the environment reduced.

LET'S BRING WILDLIFE BACK

CLIMATE IS IN CRISIS **Let's make nature part of the solution.**

Resilient nature will help combat climate change. We need more carbon to be locked up in our plants, soils and seas. We need to restore broken ecosystems.

WE ARE IN CRISIS **Let's have more people on nature's side.**

Our wellbeing and economy rely on a healthy, natural environment. We need everyone to be passionate about wildlife with at least 1 in 4 people to be taking action for nature's recovery.



Wildlife is in crisis

You might not even notice or you might have forgotten. You might remember that the countryside was different when you were growing up. Subtle changes are easily missed. When was the last time you saw a hedgehog or heard a skylark? We have unknowingly accepted this creeping loss and yet for many, nature as it is today is seen as normal.

Nature today is not normal. Since the 1930s, species-rich wildflower meadows have become virtually extinct. Since the 1950s, we have lost over half the abundance of all species across the UK. Since the 1970s, there's been a 60% fall in vertebrates globally. Elsewhere, recent reports tell us that insect populations have collapsed by 75% between 1990 and 2014. In the UK, we have lost half of our farmland birds in one generation.

Cheshire is not immune to these trends. Less than 10% of our region is protected for wildlife. The few places where a rich diversity of life can still be found are nature reserves and special wildlife sites. Without these havens the picture would be even worse, but they are too small and are under siege from a host of external pressures. There are simply not enough of these precious places left to save biodiversity.

But it is not too late. Otters return when we clean up our rivers, insects thrive when we create new meadows and birds nest in new hedgerows planted on farms. Nature thrives when we make space for it in our villages and towns. Let's do much more.

Let's bring wildlife back.



Climate is in crisis

We are facing a climate crisis and nature is a big part of the solution. Healthy ecosystems and restored habitats will help us play our part in delivering the UN's Paris Agreement to tackle the climate emergency.

Our vast peatlands should protect us. They offer the largest land-based carbon store in the world, but we have drained and burned and cut them – releasing their carbon into the atmosphere. They have become a carbon enemy – contributing 4% of the UK's annual greenhouse gas emissions¹.

Our woodlands should protect us. Trees are an effective weapon against the climate crisis, but we are not planting enough of them. Average woodland cover in the EU is over 40%². In the UK, it is 13%³ and in Cheshire it is less than 7%. Our insistence on prioritising other land use denies us the benefits of woodland which extend beyond carbon sequestration to biodiversity and spiritual gain.

Our soils should protect us. UK soils store 10 billion tonnes of carbon – equivalent to 80 years of our annual greenhouse gas emissions – but unless we change how we farm, we will lose this benefit. In the pursuit of ever-cheaper food, we have already stripped our soils of over half of their carbon⁴.

Our wetlands should protect us. They are nature's flood defences and they hold twice as much carbon as our woodland. However, we have drained them and replaced them with farms, houses and roads. We have turned our rivers against us. We have filled them with chemicals, enclosed them underground and straightened, deepened and constrained them. As the climate crisis pours more water onto our land, it has nowhere to go. It rushes into our towns and cities, and overflows onto our streets.

Nature has the solution, but we have stood in its way and our changing climate is the consequence.

We know that peatlands we have restored now capture carbon from the atmosphere once more. We know that rivers we have reconnected with the landscape now reduce the local impacts of flooding. We know that woodlands and hedgerows we have planted now lock up carbon. Let's do much more.

Let's bring wildlife back.

¹ <https://www.ceh.ac.uk/news-and-media/news/human-activity-means-uk-peatlands-contribute-climate-change>

² <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/EDN-20180321-1>

³ <https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/statistics/statistics-by-topic/woodland-statistics/>

⁴ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/805926/State_of_the_environment_soil_report.pdf

We are in crisis

We have moved away from nature. Eight out of 10 of us now live in towns and cities. We live in our homes. We stream films. We follow social media. We drive in our cars. Some of us have lost the words to name nature because we no longer see wildlife every day. Many do not understand it. We are far from nature and it is far from us. It happens on the television in faraway places. We do not know how to get back to nature and we are too distracted to find out.

Our disconnect with nature is snowballing with each passing generation. The less parents know, the less they can teach their own children about their natural world. New generations grow up more and more distant from the natural world around them. They are starved of the opportunity to enjoy the wonder of wildlife and to understand their place amongst nature. They do not miss it when it disappears and so it continues to slip away unnoticed. When we lose our connection with nature, mental health problems, obesity and isolation rise.

Meanwhile, businesses suffer when we don't take care of our natural environment and we pay the price. Our utility bills are higher because we need to clean our water. Our food bills are rising because farming is not sustainable. The costs of flood damage are devastating where nature's defences fail. The social and economic impacts of our apathy towards dealing with these issues is huge and growing. Those living furthest from nature, often the poorest, suffer most. We are facing a nature deficiency pandemic.

Yet it doesn't need to be like this. It is hard to overstate how much good nature does for us. Study after study documents the psychological and physical benefits of connecting with nature. We know that the health of our volunteers improves when they spend time outside with nature. We know that children who connect with nature through Forest Schools do better in the classroom. We know that when we connect with nature, we are calmer, happier and feel more fulfilled. Let's do much more.

Let's bring wildlife back.



Our 10-point plan to bring wildlife back

We only have a short time to act but it's not too late. With your help, nature can recover. Over the next 10 years we will act, help others and advocate to bring wildlife back. Will you join us?

- **1** Protect places where wildlife lives
- **2** Bring wildlife back to our land and sea
- **3** Create a society that cares about nature
- **4** Work with farmers so wildlife can thrive
- **5** Embrace wildlife as our neighbour in our towns and cities
- **6** Grow our stores of natural carbon
- **7** Build a network of people campaigning for nature
- **8** Make our rivers cleaner and healthier
- **9** Make planning and policies give more to nature than they take away
- **10** Collaborate with people who share our passion for wildlife



Our 10-point plan to bring wildlife back



1 Protect places where wildlife lives

Let's stand up for our wild places. Protection for wildlife is no longer an option, it is essential. We need a Nature Recovery Network made up of thousands of interconnected wild places on land and at sea that allow wildlife to thrive and spread.

We will increase the area of land that we own and manage as nature reserves. We will work with communities, local authorities and landowners, to create new habitats on land where wildlife value is low. We will work with the custodians of special places for wildlife to make sure they are well managed and protected for the future.



2 Bring wildlife back to our land and sea

Let's reverse the decline of the last 50 years. We want abundant wildlife on land and at sea – not just the rare but the everyday. Too many species are on the verge of being lost from Cheshire forever: water voles, curlew, willow tits and adders. We need to help the Irish Sea to recover. We can improve the quality of our coastal waters and clean our beaches of litter. In doing so, our coasts can be teeming with wildlife once more.

We will seek out opportunities to deliver large-scale projects, with a focus on restoring whole ecosystems and building species abundance at every level.

Through recovery and reinstating wildlife we have lost, we will turn the tide on loss and extinction.



3 Create a society that cares about nature

Nature is good for us in many ways. We are just beginning to appreciate how experiencing and enjoying nature is good for our wellbeing. We need to share the experience of nature with a much wider range of people than those who have traditionally been associated with conservation organisations. We need everyone, from whatever walk of life, to have the opportunity to connect with and care about wildlife.

We will give everyone opportunities to take action for wildlife and experience the natural environment. We will build connection to nature into all the work that we do. We will make the health benefits of nature more widely known – promoting green prescribing and making nature connectedness a way of life at all levels of society.



4 Work with farmers so wildlife can thrive

Most land in Cheshire is farmed, so those who look after it are pivotal in bringing back a wilder countryside. Farming that works with nature can deliver food and so much more, by helping to restore damaged ecosystems that provide services we all need. Let's change the way that we farm so food production complements wildlife. This can be done alongside, not instead of, intensive agriculture.

We will expand our work with landowners who see the new opportunities that farming can bring to deliver benefits for

nature, society and climate. Together, we will use land to address the crises we face, planting trees, making space for water, bringing back insects, providing places for us to enjoy and creating new wild places.



5 Embrace wildlife as our neighbour in our towns and cities

More of us are living in towns and cities than ever before, but that doesn't mean we should lose touch with nature. We can create more urban wild spaces with green roofs, green walls, pocket parks and trees. Whether rich or poor, we all deserve equal access to nature near us. Wilder neighbourhoods are not a luxury, they are an essential part of our health and wellbeing.

We will support local authorities to use public spaces for nature's recovery, increasing pollination and addressing the climate emergency. We will bring nature into neighbourhoods and make wildlife a part of everyone's life. We will work with individuals and communities to build an urban Nature Recovery Network – starting with our gardens and connecting up natural green spaces across towns and cities. Connecting wild places and allowing wildlife more space in our towns and countryside is our insurance policy against the climate and ecological crises.



6 Grow our stores of natural carbon

The climate crisis can feel overwhelming, but nature can make a difference.

Rebuilding nature will protect us as our climate changes.



We will build Cheshire's carbon defences: our natural climate solution. We will plant well-managed forests, restore peatlands, create new wetlands and grasslands, and support coastal and undersea restoration to contribute to the global stores of carbon. As well as storing carbon, these habitats will also act as a buffer – protecting us against extreme weather events like floods and droughts. We will also reduce our own carbon footprint and aim to be climate positive by 2030.



7 Build a network of people campaigning for nature

Nature needs a voice. Our crowded island has so many voices speaking for themselves that the cries of nature have gone unheard. Thousands of species have disappeared and declined in silence. We need to speak up for nature and we need to demand nature's recovery through creation and enforcement of strong legislation.

We will empower community groups to create change. We will run public-facing campaigns to encourage individuals and communities to go and take action for wildlife in their local area. We will celebrate and showcase how people are contributing to nature's recovery. We will work with local politicians and councils to encourage them to stand up for nature throughout government.

8 Make our rivers cleaner and healthier

All our rivers should be healthy rivers. Pressures of agriculture and development mean our rivers can't follow their natural meandering courses. They have been straightened and polluted with chemicals – taking away their natural ability to manage changes in water flow. We urgently need to resurrect our waterways to reduce floods and droughts, as well as providing safe havens for wildlife.

We will work with landowners, water companies and the Environment Agency so rivers can run in their natural course, sustain wildlife, provide clean water supplies and be a place for people to relax and enjoy. We will make space for water with our natural flood management work so communities and businesses are better protected against flood and droughts.

9 Make planning and policies give more to nature than they take away

Our laws, policies and planning system must be good for nature. New infrastructure or housing estates shouldn't put wild places under threat. Thoughtful development – building with nature and not against it – can create places we want to live and work in, which we can share with wildlife.

We will use our expertise and experience to help shape national and local policy and legislation that promotes a wilder Cheshire. We will champion biodiversity net gain and we will collaborate with communities, planners, developers

and local government, so that every development gives more back to nature than it takes.

10 Collaborate with people who share our passion for wildlife

The crises ahead are too great for us to face on our own. We need to build a community of supporters to join us in this challenge. We know people are passionate about wildlife, so we need to harness that potential and join with individuals and organisations who understand why nature matters.

- Politicians listen when we speak because we represent many voices.
- Landowners and farmers work with us because they value our expertise.
- Communities bring us into their lives because our knowledge and skills help to turn ideas into reality.
- Volunteers give us their time because they know they are making a difference for nature and for themselves.
- People give generously because we have a 60-year track record of caring for wildlife and wild places.

Nature needs you and you need nature.

Let's bring wildlife back.

Why take action for nature?

Do you want our children to see hedgehogs in their neighbourhoods once more?

Do you want to wake up to the sound of birdsong, knowing that the trees they dwell in are helping lock up carbon?

Do you want to smell the sweet scent of wildflowers in meadows that are protected for bees and other pollinators?

Do you want to be able to taste food that didn't cost the earth?

Do you want to feel part of something bigger than yourself?

Why you?

There is no one without a role in this plan and we can only succeed together. Yes, these may be big global issues, but your voice matters and local action counts. Everything counts, it all adds up. We need different people playing different parts – and champions, funders, supporters, doers and thinkers.

Perhaps you can support us with your time or your money.

Perhaps you have an idea that you want us to help you grow.

Perhaps we can work together to speak with a stronger voice for nature.

Perhaps we can simply join together in celebrating your success in helping nature recover.

However you show your passion for wildlife, we want you to share it with us.

This is – and has to be – a joint effort. Together, our local actions form part of the collective national and global effort for a better, wilder future.



**Be part of the solution.
Support Cheshire Wildlife Trust.**

Let's all rise to the challenge of bringing wildlife back

Cheshire Wildlife Trust has protected wildlife and wild places across Cheshire, the Wirral and South Manchester for almost 60 years. We are a membership organisation with more than 14,700 members.

We own and manage nature reserves and work in partnership with landowners and local people to promote nature's recovery and nature-based solutions to national problems delivered locally.

We work with local communities to deliver outcomes they want – from increased health and wellbeing, to protection for their special places. We have successfully delivered projects at all scales to benefit wildlife and people. We have a skilled workforce and a great reputation for delivering excellent work.

We are looking for pioneers and partners.

If you want to talk to us about making your life, your home or your community wilder, get in touch.

If you think your workplace or business could do things differently, we can help.

If you have an idea, we'd love to hear it.

If you can give time, money, space or skills, please do.

Join us now at cheshirewildlifetrust.org.uk



Cheshire
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