

Cheshire Wildlife Trust's 62nd Annual General Meeting
Saturday 8th November 2025
Ness Botanic Gardens

President Felicity Goodey's Opening Speech

There is one thing on which all political parties are agreed: we need more economic growth; we need more houses; we need better infrastructure; we need cheaper and cleaner energy. The problem according to too many politicians is people like us. We are Nimbys, armed with legions of great crested newts and bats and we want to turn the whole of the UK into a wildlife reserve.

Yes, it's nonsense and the truth is very different.

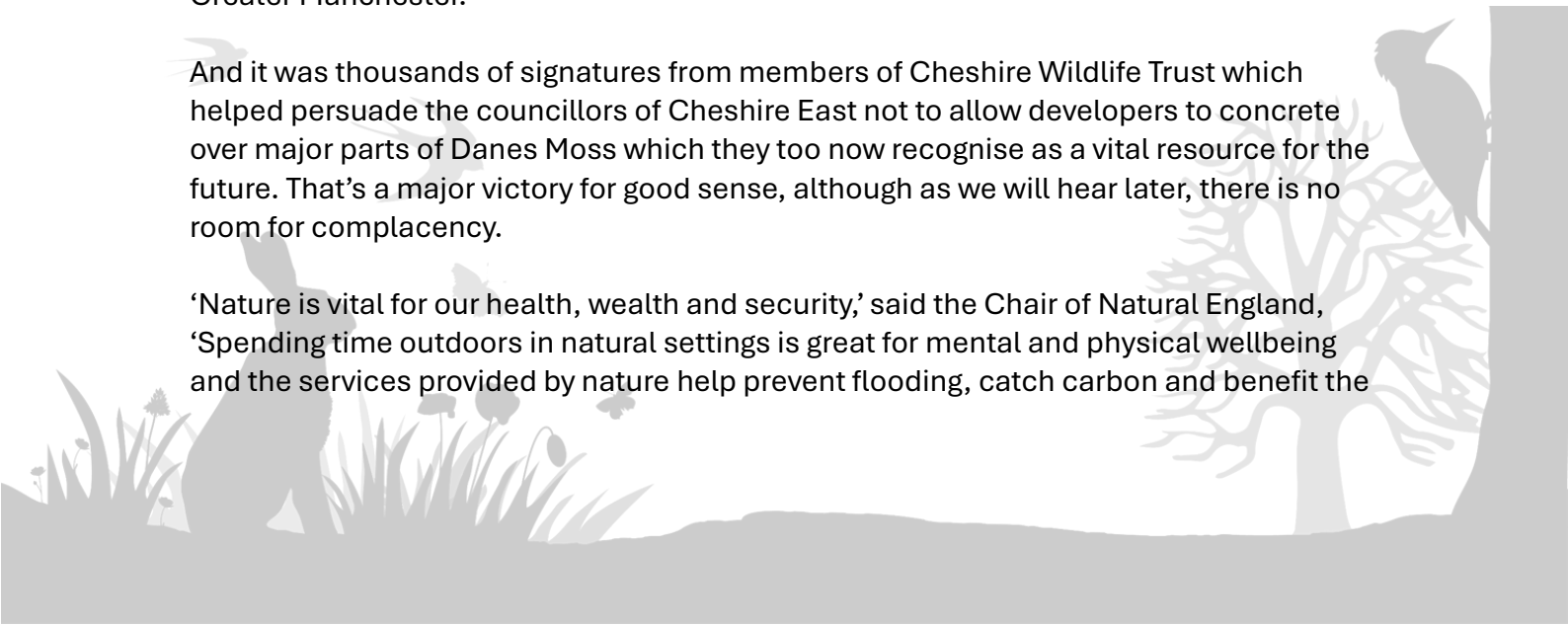
Newts and bats featured in just 3.3% of all planning appeal decisions last year; England is already the 7th most nature depleted country in the world, and in Cheshire less than 10% of our region is protected. Are we really 'nimbys' for wanting to stop further destruction?

Earlier this week, I asked the boss of one of the UK's biggest construction and civil engineering companies why was it that Britain could successfully design and build a state-of-the-art fighter plane but couldn't bring a major infrastructure project in on time or anywhere near budget. Good question, he said, and without hesitation replied, 'too much pressure to deliver short term savings'. His colleagues agreed and began to swap stories of how pressure to deliver short-term targets resulted again and again in long term cost and major over runs.

Earlier this year I had the great pleasure of receiving on behalf of the Trust a plaque to celebrate the establishment of a new National Nature Reserve at Risley, Holcroft and Chat Moss. It was ordinary people, supported and informed by experts like Cheshire Wildlife Trust, who had persuaded politicians not to allow the further destruction of peatlands for short term gains, because those peatlands store billions of tonnes of carbon and provide a vital natural resource for millions of people in Cheshire and Greater Manchester.

And it was thousands of signatures from members of Cheshire Wildlife Trust which helped persuade the councillors of Cheshire East not to allow developers to concrete over major parts of Danes Moss which they too now recognise as a vital resource for the future. That's a major victory for good sense, although as we will hear later, there is no room for complacency.

'Nature is vital for our health, wealth and security,' said the Chair of Natural England, 'Spending time outdoors in natural settings is great for mental and physical wellbeing and the services provided by nature help prevent flooding, catch carbon and benefit the



local economy.’ He’s quite right. He was speaking as the Government’s national representative – what a pity then, that as national Government struggles to deliver the promises which secured them votes, they too often begin to overturn what local people want and know to be in the long-term interests of the community.

We at Cheshire Wildlife Trust believe it is not in the interests of a healthy population and cleaner, cheaper energy to destroy an internationally recognised and protected major wetland habitat like the Mersey Estuary, or to concrete over the whole of the Adlington greenbelt. The Mersey Tidal Barrage and the New Town of Adlington are just two of the current planning proposals being opposed by Cheshire Wildlife Trust.

It is down to people like us to force governments to listen, not to the lobbyists chasing short term profit or political advisers chasing next year’s votes, but to the facts and to work with a broad range of community interests to come up with proposals which are genuine, long-term solutions to benefit future generations, not short-term commercially driven expediencies.

Devolution gives more decision-making power and funding to regions like Cheshire and Warrington. By 2027, we may have a new regional mayor with significant power over planning and economic development. Wildlife Trusts already have more members than the three established political parties put together; Cheshire alone has more than 17,600 members. We have a voice, a strong one. Please use it to support campaigns being run in your name. We can provide all the ammunition you need to pressure your local councillor, MP or regional mayor into voting for nature recovery not destruction, for the long-term benefit of the community, not short-term commercially driven gain.

This is not ‘Nimbyism’!

And the more of us the better. So, this Christmas why don’t we all try to recruit another 17,600 members through gifts of membership or simple persuasion. Give them the facts! As Charlotte will report later, Cheshire Wildlife Trust continues to make huge gains for wildlife recovery and habitat restoration. It’s all thanks to you and the more of you there are, the more nature will benefit.



Cheshire Wildlife Trust's President, Felicity Goodey, with our Volunteer of the Year, Stephen Ross