

together for nature

Wild   
Oxfordshire

ANNUAL  
REVIEW  
2024/2025





# Wild Oxfordshire brings people together and enables them to create space for nature to benefit us all



## OUR VISION

A more natural, resilient, and biodiverse Oxfordshire

## OUR PURPOSE

To catalyse change by identifying needs, convening partnerships and unlocking opportunities for conservation action



## OUR VALUES

**POSITIVE** – Working collaboratively to understand other points of view

**AGILE** – Responding quickly once we have identified a need for action

**OPEN** – New ideas, new ways of working, and alternative approaches



## OUR KEY ACTIVITIES

**COLLABORATING** – Connecting people within the conservation sector to work for effective change

**ENGAGING** – Providing bespoke advice to empower people to enhance their environment

**INSPIRING** – Piloting exemplar activities and sharing stories to encourage others

**INFORMING** – Raising awareness and sharing curated, relevant, and trusted information





# a note from our Chair



**David Knight**

**Wild Oxfordshire exists to help create a more natural, resilient and biodiverse county for the benefit of all. So how do we achieve this?**

*Where needed, we bring people together to help remove blockers and foster the right conditions to trigger changes in land management practices which favour nature recovery alongside other considerations such as the need to produce food, to remain financially sustainable, and to enable people to connect with nature.*

*As a charity, Wild Oxfordshire has no nature reserves and manages no land, but we connect with so many people and organisations that do. We also know that working to do the right thing for Oxfordshire's wildlife is hard work. Working together, to share challenges, inspire each other, and foster the human connections that will protect the natural connections of a healthy ecosystem is what we do.*

*Collaboration is in our lifeblood, and our dedicated staff, trustees, volunteers, supporters, funders, partners, friends, and colleagues are absolutely essential to enable us to collectively achieve nature's recovery.*



“For over 30 years, Wild Oxfordshire has been working with a wide range of organisations and groups. The people we empower deliver amazing spaces for wildlife, which benefit us all. Together we can achieve nature's recovery across the county.”

**Camilla Burrow, Chief Executive, Wild Oxfordshire**



# plans & partnerships



**Working together for nature’s recovery is essential so that we can support each other and collaborate to achieve greater impact for our environment and communities.**

An essential part of effective working is knowledge exchange and networking. This is currently achieved by a variety of formal and informal groups, partnerships, and networks which we chair, host or contribute towards. We also share inspiring stories via our monthly email Bulletin, social media platforms, short films, and website guidance. This year we have:

- Acted as Vice-Chair of the Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership.
- Hosted several meetings, workshops and site visits for the Biodiversity Advisory Group, Conservation Target Area Managers, Communities Round Table, and Oxfordshire Environment Board.
- Held a Nature Positive Business event on ‘Sowing the Seeds of Change for Nature’, looking at how we can seed and accelerate positive approaches to nature recovery in organisations.
- Held our Annual Lecture with Professor Nathalie Seddon on ‘Nature-based Solutions for Systemic Change’.

“Wild Oxfordshire plays an essential role in pulling together the various strands of nature recovery in the county, inspiring conservation action, and leading the development of biodiversity strategy and vision.”

**Graham Scholey, Biodiversity Technical Specialist, Environment Agency**



**50**

*delegates attended our Annual Lecture on Nature-based Solutions for Systemic Change*

**>130**

*organisations working in partnership with Wild Oxfordshire*

**2130**

*responses to the public consultation on the draft Local Nature Recovery Strategy*



# community ecology

**Our Community Ecology Programme inspires and empowers local communities to connect with their nature spaces.**

Our ecologists foster local understanding of biodiversity, and train volunteers on how to protect and enhance their green and blue infrastructure for future generations. They give tailored, expert advice and support on habitat management and creation, engagement with nature recovery, sources of funding, and signpost to further guidance.

- Provided on-site advice for 12 community groups resulting in the improved management of grasslands, churchyards and green spaces and the planting of a pollinator patch.
- Worked with 24 parish councils, providing advice on protecting, and improving their land through hedgerow planting, meadow creation and enhancement, road verge management, and pollinator planting.
- Attended 16 events promoting engagement with nature, including talks, walks, and attendance at local nature fairs.
- Ran 16 hedgerow planting days across 12 locations in Oxfordshire, engaging with 200 volunteers. We had volunteers from FarmAbility, a local charity that runs outdoor projects for adults with learning disabilities.
- Secured new funding from a local business to survey their green spaces and deliver a series of events to tenants in their local area.
- Delivered 24 nature-based events in Kidlington, partnering with schools, nursing homes, scouts, the local growing spaces group and the library.
- Ran a successful Open Wildlife Gardens event, with over 100 people signed up to be inspired by 12 gardens managed for wildlife in mind. Also, ran three Engaging Community Nature Recovery Action meetings with conservation professionals to share knowledge and build partnerships.
- Hosted two Conservation Target Area Leads meetings to gather together professionals taking nature recovery action in key areas of the county.



“The strength of the Oxfordshire Hedgerow Project was in its grassroots engagement with communities”

**Helen Marshall,  
Director, CPRE Oxfordshire**

**12**  
community groups took our advice on improving their local habitats

**200**  
volunteers engaged with our 16 hedgerow planting days



# curlew recovery



**Our flagship projects play a pivotal role in conserving and enhancing biodiversity by focusing on key species, such as curlew, and their ecosystems.**

Through collaboration between local organisations and farmers, the **Curlew Recovery Partnership** is working to improve the breeding success of curlews across key sites in the Upper Thames. This initiative aims to improve our understanding of curlew breeding in grasslands and provide evidence of the effectiveness of conservation efforts to policymakers. This year we have:

- Located 68 territorial pairs of curlews across the project area, the most we have found in a single year so far, thanks to our Partnership’s network of fieldworkers.
- Monitored 29 curlew nests in detail for the Curlew Solutions Trial (led by the British Trust for Ornithology). This is out of a total of 146 nests across the five study landscapes in England.
- Fenced 27 nests, of which 15 hatched (56% – the lowest hatching success rate since the project began).
- Enabled 12 chicks to fledge – a poor year possibly linked to very wet weather and flooding early in the breeding season, and a cold, wet spring.

“It has been extremely useful to be able to share information and between fieldworkers and benefit from the experience gained by partner organisations each year”

**Jan Gilbride, Banbury Ornithological Society**

**68**  
territorial pairs of curlews located



**27**  
nests fenced and 12 curlew chicks successfully fledged



# yellow wagtail research

**The Yellow Wagtail Partnership is a landscape-scale conservation project which aims to restore four miles of wetland meadows and pastures along the River Thames.**

We are holistically managing the riparian grasslands in this area to create a place that can be enjoyed by people and allow farming businesses and wildlife to thrive. This year we have:

- Had botanical surveys conducted on two of our meadows to inform management.
- Welcomed 13 Dexter cattle onto Lower Farm, which will play a key part in grassland management of the Yellow Wagtail Partnership area.
- Enabled at least three pairs of yellow wagtails to nest in the nearby arable crops last summer.
- Delivered four talks to community and farming groups, engaging 67 people in the work of the Yellow Wagtail Partnership.
- Written one article for the West Berkshire Countryside Society about the Yellow Wagtail Partnership.



67

*people engaged with our four Yellow Wagtail Partnership talks delivered to community and farming groups*



13

*Dexter cattle managing the grassland at Lower Farm*

*“Wild Oxfordshire has a growing number of projects working with farmers. I hope my research will feed into these, supporting yellow wagtails across the county and beyond.”*

**Sophie Cunnington, Yellow Wagtail Project Officer, Wild Oxfordshire**



# Evenlode catchment



**The Evenlode Catchment Partnership (ECP) is a dynamic collaboration of over 20 organisations and countless individuals, united by a shared commitment to return the River Evenlode and its tributaries to good ecological status.**

Highlights include:

- **Winning awards** – Our film ‘Beneath the Surface’, a film commissioned by Wild Oxfordshire and directed by Nicola Schafer, received the prestigious Award of Merit from The Best Shorts Competition. The documentary highlights the vital work of ECP in helping improve water quality and associated biodiversity in the Evenlode.
- **Outreach and engagement** – We delivered a Natural Flood Management (NFM) scheme worth £34k at Fairspear Hill Farm, creating areas where surface water flows can be stored to reduce flood risk and to settle out sediments. We also delivered a series of river restoration, wetland creation, NFM and weir removal projects at Rynehill Farm.
- **Natural Flood Management** – In 2018, NFM measures, including temporary water storage bunds, were installed on a farm above Milton-under-Wychwood to reduce flood risk in the village below. Storm Bert put these to the test in November 2024 and, on this occasion, the houses along the Littlestock Brook in Milton-under-Wychwood did not flood, showing that these earlier measures worked.

We had a very wet winter which jeopardised the completion of some of our construction projects at Cornwell and Rynehill. However, the weather turned in our favour just in time to complete these projects.

**£34k**

*scheme delivered to reduce flood risk at Fairspear Hill Farm*

**1**

*Award of Merit for our film, ‘Beneath the Surface’*

*“I am really impressed with the innovative approaches for river restoration and natural flood management.”*

**Professor Sir Dieter Helm, Economist and Academic, University of Oxford**



# farmer clusters

**Farmer clusters are networks of local farmers who come together to learn about sustainable farming practices and deliver nature recovery at a landscape scale.**

They are also important social networks, allowing farmers to socialise, meet their neighbours and create dialogue that might not otherwise happen.

We now facilitate two farmer clusters: the Clumps Farmer Cluster, located between Nuneham Courtenay and Cholsey; and the Ridgeway Farmer Cluster, which is located along the Ridgeway, south of Wantage.

Highlights include:

- Engaging with 22 farmers from the two clusters and including many more farmers on our mailing list – we hope they will become more involved in the future.
- Securing Facilitation Funding for three years for the Clumps Farmer Cluster. This will continue until June 2027, after which, funds are uncertain.
- Securing Farming in Protected Landscapes funding for the Ridgeway Farmer Cluster to allow it to run for the last financial year.
- Holding seven training events for the Clumps Cluster, and four training events for the Ridgeway Farmer Cluster. Topics included hedgerow management, stewardship, Biodiversity Net Gain and deer management.



“It was brilliant to see so many engaged farmers and, in particular, the reach Wild Oxfordshire achieved bringing in so many from outside of the Protected Landscapes”

**Jemima Sellwood, Farming in Protected Landscapes Officer,  
North Wessex Downs National Landscape**

**22**  
farmers engaged  
in two farmer  
clusters



**11**  
training events  
held for the two  
farmer clusters



# funding and supporters

**In the year to 31st March 2025, Wild Oxfordshire's total income was £680,397.**

This was down by 6% on the prior year reflecting the flow of project work in the year. At the same time total expenditure at £695,335 was down by only 2%. Of this expenditure, 95% was in respect of the projects which deliver our charitable objectives, and 5% was on central management and administration; a healthy balance. Of our total expenditure, 48% is the cost of our staff, our key asset in the delivery of our objectives.

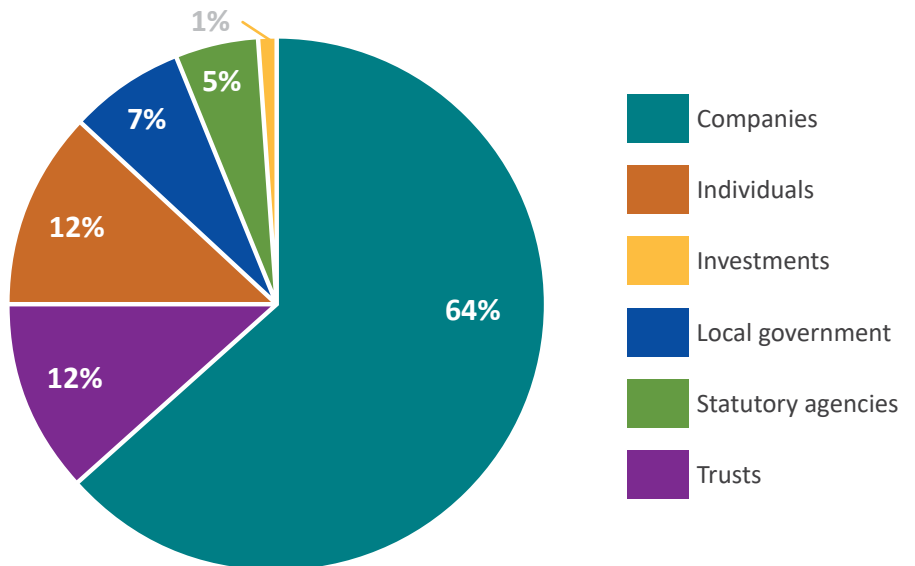
Of our project expenditure, almost 58% related to the Evenlode Catchment Partnership programme. This preponderance reflects the hosting role that Wild Oxfordshire plays in this programme, acting as the overall recipient and disburser of funding for a variety of projects in the catchment.

For most of our projects, income at least equalled expenditure. There are, however, a few projects which we consider worth supporting from unrestricted funds to maximise the wildlife benefits they generate. In the year, we allocated £61,982 to these.

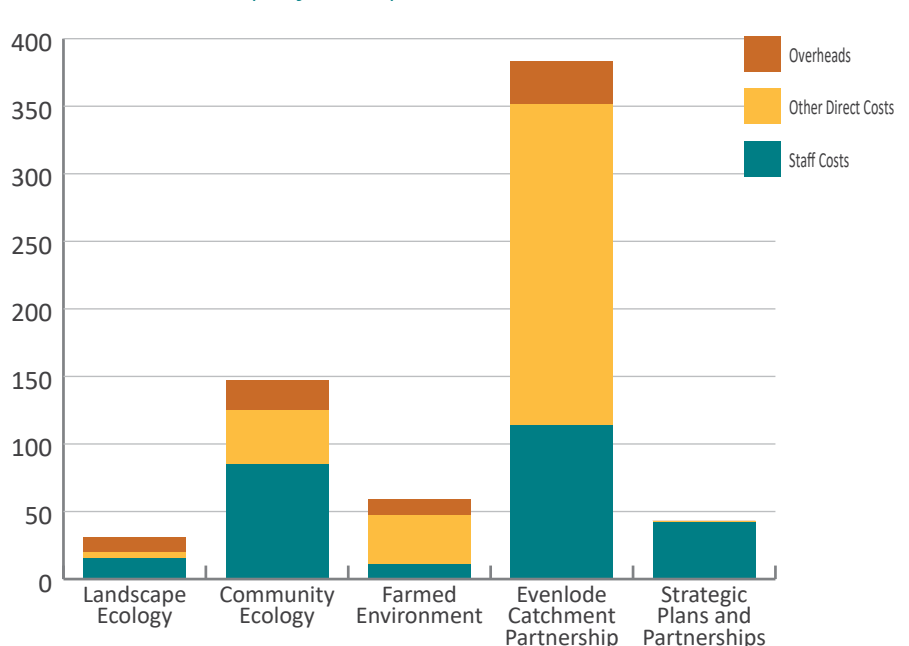
Taking all income, expenditure and investment gains into account, we ended the year with an increase in funds of £41,635, bringing our total unrestricted funds to £385,327. Our robust financial position, built through targeted fundraising and modest core spending, keeps us above our £175,000 minimum reserves threshold. We are never complacent about our financial sustainability and continue to invest cautiously in our organisational core capacity so to support our project staff. Our biggest ongoing challenge is securing new sources of income to sustain our strategic partnerships work.

| Wild Oxfordshire's financial position           | 2023/24    | 2024/25    |
|---|------------|------------|
| Funds at start of year                          | £343,692   | £317,402   |
| Income  | £680,397   | £726,418   |
| Expenditure                                     | (£695,335) | (£712,433) |
| Gains from investments                          | £56,573    | £12,305    |
| Funds carried forward into 25/26 (unrestricted) | £385,327   | £343,692   |

Wild Oxfordshire sources of income 2024/25, total £726,418



Wild Oxfordshire project expenditure 2024/25, total £663,340





# looking ahead.....

## 2025 saw the publication of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)

The LNRS is a new county-wide strategy for nature, co-created by a partnership across Oxfordshire – from councils and nature organisations, to leading researchers.

Yet the LNRS is more than just a plan. It is a commitment to restoring nature for everyone in Oxfordshire. We all need to work together to take the next steps and ensure the Strategy is turned into nature recovery on the ground. There are many people across Oxfordshire already taking action for nature, including community groups, parish and town councils, farmers, schools, businesses, and landowners. The LNRS is a brilliant tool that we can all use to help guide us.

We know that sometimes people will want more guidance and support than can be provided by an online tool, so Wild Oxfordshire will continue to bring people together to support them in the development and delivery of local nature recovery projects, so that together we can achieve nature recovery in Oxfordshire.

## 2026/27

*we will work towards a brighter, greener future for our communities, wildlife and landscape*



# WILD OXFORDSHIRE ANNUAL REVIEW 2024/25

together for nature



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