

WILDLIFE AND COUNTRYSIDE LINK

England & Wales · Charity number 1107460

Details

Other names	LINK
Status	Registered
Legal form	Charitable company
Company number	03889519
Registered	2005-01-05
Register	View on the Charity Commission register

Contact

Address	Unit N101C Vox Studios 1-45 Durham Street London SE11 5JH
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Activities

Objects: TO PROMOTE THE CONSERVATION AND PROTECTION OF WILDLIFE AND COUNTRYSIDE FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE PUBLIC.

Activities: Wildlife and Countryside Link (Link) brings together environmental voluntary organisations in the UK united by their common interest in the conservation and enjoyment of the natural and historic environment. Our aim is to maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of the voluntary sector by facilitating collaboration.

Classification

- **How:** Provides Advocacy/advice/information, Acts As An Umbrella Or Resource Body
- **What:** Environment/conservation/heritage
- **Who:** Other Charities Or Voluntary Bodies, The General Public/mankind

Geography

- **Area of benefit:** WORLDWIDE
- Throughout England And Wales

Finances

Period end	Income	Expenditure	Assets	Employees
2024-12-31	£909,221	£843,406	£830,192	12
2023-12-31	£738,240	£603,600	£764,377	11
2022-12-31	£589,596	£542,179	£629,737	11
2021-12-31	£675,485	£470,929	£582,320	10
2020-12-31	£483,159	£344,242	-	-

Trustees

Name	Role	Appointed
Rebecca Susan Speight	Chair	2025-12-11
Adam Christopher Royle		2024-12-12
Allison Claire Ogden-Newton		2021-12-06
Dominic Dyer		2018-12-03
Dr James Vincent Cooper		2023-12-11
Jason Reeves		2021-12-06
Matthew Ray Courtney Browne		2025-12-11

WILDLIFE AND COUNTRYSIDE LINK

England & Wales - Charity number 1107460

Accounts

Wildlife and
Countryside



Wildlife and Countryside Link

(A company limited by guarantee)

Company number: 03889519

Annual Report 2024

The Trustees submit their report together with the financial statements of Wildlife and Countryside Link for the year ended 31 December 2024.

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A Message from Link's Chair

2024 was a year of campaigning action for Wildlife and Countryside Link.

We brought our first ever judicial review, challenging the Government's decision not to consider a revision of the Environmental Improvement Plan in light of a damning progress report by the Office for Environmental Protection. The legal action brought together members large and small to call for Government to honour the intention of the Environment Act 2021 by strengthening the Plan. We were delighted that the incoming Government agreed to revise the EIP and the process is already well underway. We hope for a new plan that links targets with science-based action plans and clear allocation of responsibility for delivery.

At the opposite end of the scale, perhaps, we also organised our first mass demonstration. Working with Chris Packham's team and a huge array of environmental groups, Link led development of Restore Nature Now. The march was the largest march for nature ever in the UK, bringing together 60,000-100,000 people in Westminster in support of stronger action for nature recovery. We are hugely grateful to everyone who made the effort to join us, for the heartfelt speeches, the camaraderie and the humour. Surely the message was heard loud and clear. There's no time to lose to restore nature.

As the General Election approached, we already had a strong shared platform for action through the Nature 2030 campaign. We put politicians on the spot at a National Nature Hustings, kindly hosted by Chester Zoo, and in conjunction with The Wildlife Trusts Wild Live event. We were pleased to see Nature 2030 proposals reflected in party manifestos across the political spectrum, particularly with renewed commitments to halt the decline of biodiversity by 2030.

Alongside all this, our work on day-to-day policy and legislation continued. I am astonished and delighted by the level of collaboration and expertise shown every day in Link working groups, pressing for bolder and more effective law and policy for nature.

These actions have set a high bar of expectation for the new government. Sir Keir's team take office at a time of unprecedented national and international challenges for environmental policy, and finding a way to honour their environmental promises will be difficult with so many obstacles in the way. But that is exactly what they must do. Restoring nature and stopping climate change, improving animal welfare, and improving the quality of people's environment is critical to our future. We will be there to challenge and support the new Government in making this the Parliament that the decline of nature was finally turned around.

Martin Spray CBE DSc, Chair, Wildlife and Countryside Link

Reference and Administrative Details

Link Trustees

Martin Spray, Chair	(appointed December 2018)
Dominic Dyer	(appointed December 2018)
Marcus Gilleard	(appointed March 2015 / resigned 2024)
Sandy Luk	(appointed December 2018 / resigned 2024)
Nadia Shaikh	(appointed December 2021 / resigned 2024)
Allison Ogden-Newton	(appointed December 2021)
Jason Reeves	(appointed December 2021)
Ali Plummer	(appointed December 2023)
Dr James Cooper	(appointed December 2023)
Jemima Child-Clarke	(appointed December 2023)
Adam Royle	(appointed December 2024)

Company Registered Number
03889519

Charity Registered Number
1107460

Principal Office Address

N101C Vox Studios
1-45 Durham Street
London
SE11 5JH

Company Secretary and CEO

Dr Richard Benwell

Independent Examiner

Richard Appleyard FCA
Gibbons Mannington & Phipps LLP
Chartered Accountants
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Bexhill-on-Sea
TN40 1HE

Bankers

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PO Box 101
1 Balloon Street
Manchester
M60 4EP

Nationwide
5-11 St George's Street Douglas
Isle of Man
IM99 1RN

Solicitors

Russell-Cooke Solicitors
2 Putney Hill
London
SW15 6AS

Trustees' Report

Objectives and Activities

The charitable objects of Wildlife and Countryside Link are to promote the conservation and protection of wildlife and countryside for the benefit of the public.¹

Link is the largest environment and wildlife coalition in England. We bring together 86 organisations to develop and advocate proposals for improvements in law and policy for the benefit of wildlife and our environment. Our members campaign to conserve, enhance and access our landscapes, habitats, rivers and seas and protect our animals and plants. Together we have the support of over eight million people in the UK and directly protect over 750,000 hectares of land and 800 miles of coastline.

As part of our current strategy:

- We aim to be a policy powerhouse for the sector: keeping a broad overview, but targeting a small number of strategic areas where we can generate new, detailed and ambitious policy proposals that will influence policymakers. Our policy groups will forge progressive consensus: aiming for strong, common positions that complement individual members' work.
- We aim to be an amplifier for our individual voices: highlighting great work in our membership and lending focus and coherence to our common messages in the press and in political advocacy. Our communications will reflect and reinforce members' communications: creating opportunities for members large and small, as well as providing a collective identity in the media and in Westminster.
- We aim to be a strategic hub and institutional touchpoint: providing leadership in agreeing cross-sector strategic direction, supporting our members in Westminster, and acting as a nodal point for working with other groups. Our secretariat will lead and serve: adding value to members' interactions by identifying strategic opportunities, creating alliances and providing professional policy insight.

With a General Election ahead, we aim to ensure that all political parties make clear commitments for nature and animal welfare, capable of improving the lives of animals, and stopping the decline of species abundance by the end of the decade.

We want to play our part in bringing the huge and varied environmental movement together to express people's love of animals and nature in a way that cuts through the short-termism of politics. We will support the sector in coming together in a major public demonstration, we will team up with organisations with strong local networks to support informed doorstep questions and local hustings events focused on nature, and we will ensure that all parties are held to account at national level for their environmental commitments. We will continue to work with close partners in the delivery of this work, including Green Alliance, the Climate Coalition, Sustain, the Nature Friendly Farming Network and others.

At the same time, we will ensure that the day-to-day delivery of environmental ambition is not slowed down by political timelines. The year starts with the Offshore Petroleum Licensing Bill, which we oppose. We will work with Parliamentarians to propose measures to strengthen protection for Marine Protected Areas and to prioritise space for nature and renewable energy generation at sea, rather than expanding fossil fuel industries.

Key animal welfare legislation is also moving forward, with the Animal Welfare (Live Exports) Bill, which would fulfil a long-standing shared campaign, and the Hunting Trophy (Import Prohibition) Bill early in the year. At the same time, we will press for effective implementation of animal welfare provisions in the Online Safety Act, following our successful work on the bill last year.

¹ The Trustees of Wildlife and Countryside Link confirm that the organisation has Charitable Purposes pursuant to the Charities Act 2011. The Trustees believe there are clear and identifiable public benefits arising from the pursuit of Link's aims and objectives, in terms of an enhanced natural environment, more abundant wildlife, and the health wellbeing and economic benefits they bring, and that these benefits are freely available to the public without restriction.

Both offshore and onshore, strategic planning will be key to ensure that climate change mitigation can go hand-in-hand with nature recovery. Last year, we added to public debate about the need for a Land Use Framework with a detailed description of what an effective framework would include: it should be target-driven, carry weight in planning, permitting and spending decisions, and it should be transparent and adaptable. This year, we will expand on that work with our Planning Ahead project, bringing together climate-focused and nature-focused organisations to ensure that the environment movement stands together against harmful deregulation in planning and in support of reforms that can deliver an integrated climate and nature agenda.

Achievements and Performance

In 2024, Link was at the forefront of public policy debate, working closely with other coalitions to guard against environmentally harmful policy proposals and to create new opportunities for improvement.

In 2024, Link managed and provided support for 19 groups on the following policy areas:

- Agriculture: Chair, Barnaby Coupe (The Wildlife Trusts); Vice Chair, Alice Groom (RSPB)
- Animal Welfare: Chair, Claire Bass (Humane Society International-UK); Vice Chair, Arthur Thomas (Four Paws UK)
- Blueprint for Water: Chair, Ali Morse (The Wildlife Trusts); Co Vice Chairs, Tessa Wardley (The Rivers Trusts) and Emily Smith (Angling Trust)
- Bovine TB: no Chair
- Bycatch: no Chair
- Chemical Taskforce: no Chair
- Circular Economy (formerly Resources & Waste): Chair, Paula Chin (WWF)
- Education and Learning: Co-Chairs, Suzanne Welch (RSPB), Cathriona Hickey (ZSL), and Jenny Davis (The Wildlife Trusts)
- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion: Chair, Miriam Bentley-Rose (The Wildlife Trusts), Vice Chair, Meera Inglis (RSPB)
- Invasive Non-Native Species: Chairs: David Smith (Buglife)
- Land Use Planning: Chair, Rebecca Pullinger (The Wildlife Trust); Vice Chair, Carl Bunnage (RSPB)
- Legal Strategy: Co-Chairs, Carol Day and Rosie Sutherland (RSPB)
- Local Nature Recovery Strategies: no Chair
- Marine: Chair, Kirsten Carter (RSPB), Vice Chair, Bernadette Butterfield (RSPB)
- Marine Mammals: Chair, Lucy Babey (ORCA), Chair, Sue Fisher (AWI)
- Nature Policy: no Chair
- Nature and Wellbeing: Co-Chairs, Kate Conto (The Ramblers) and Dom Higgins (TWT)
- Trees and Woodlands: Chair, Nick Phillips (Woodland Trust); Vice Chair, Andrew Weatherall (RSPB)
- Wildlife Crime & Trade: Chair, Dominic Dyer (Born Free); Vice Chair, Craig Fellows (Badger Trust)

Key achievements in 2024 include:

General Election Hustings

In June, Wildlife & Countryside Link organised the 'Big Nature & Climate Debate', which transpired to be the only environmental hustings in the 2024 General Election. Held at Chester Zoo, covered by Channel 4 and filmed by The Wildlife Trusts, the debate saw spokespeople from England's largest parties asked to set out how they would halt the decline in nature and get the country on track to achieving net zero. This pressure saw the following commitments made at the hustings:

Toby Perkins pledged that one of the first actions of a Labour Government would be to ratify the Global Oceans Treaty, as well as reviewing the Environmental Improvement Plan to ensure Environment Act targets are met (**when Labour entered Government in July, they announced the [EIP Review](#), securing this essential step forward for nature. Pressure has also been exerted by a pioneering [legal case](#) led by Link**).

Rebecca Pow pledged that the £1 billion extra proposed by the Conservatives for farming budget would cover funding for innovative technology designed to reduce chemical use. Adrian Ramsay pledged that Green MPs would give the achievement of the commitment to protect 30% of land and sea for nature by 2030 the same attention and focus as the achievement of net zero. Lord Newby pledged that Liberal Democrats would require all large companies to publish and implement plans to make their operations a net positive for nature.

The hustings followed on from the handing of the Nature 2030 open letter, signed by over 100,000 people, to major parties in alignment with Restore Nature Now asks, adding further pressure for nature commitments.

Leveling up the planning system to support nature's recovery

Recognising planning as a key issue in the general election and for any new Government, the Land Use Planning Group published a report called '[Planning Ahead](#)', setting out how planning reform could deliver nature recovery alongside housing and energy infrastructure. This report helped build consensus within the Link coalition and beyond about the reforms needed to deliver key infrastructure to fight climate change and restore nature.

With the aim of influencing the new Government's planning reforms and forthcoming Planning and Infrastructure Bill, the Group followed up with a series of briefings on key topics, including fixing [Biodiversity Net Gain](#), accelerating [nutrient neutrality](#) solutions, [nature-friendly design](#) and building standards, improving the [Green Belt for nature](#), and on proposals for a [Nature Restoration Fund](#). Towards the end of the year, Link launched the public campaign [Wilder by Design](#), aimed at ensuring that the planning reforms and the forthcoming Bill do not undermine nature protections and include the policies needed to recover nature.

The group also responded to the Government's [consultation on the National Planning Policy Framework](#) and to the Environmental Audit Committee's call for [evidence on housing growth and environmental sustainability](#).

Blueprint for Water

Blueprint for Water published its PR24 scorecard '[Achieving Environmental Ambitions](#)' in September 2024, which [was covered](#) in national press. Several of the recommendations have been taken on-board in Ofwat's Final Determination, most notably around transparency, reporting of environmental outcomes, and greater flexibility to allow companies to swap to green or hybrid solutions within the AMP.

The Water (Special Measures) Bill has been strengthened and will deliver more for nature due to Government partially accepting Link amendments, [including the](#) addition of Water Only Companies to pollution incident reduction plans, a requirement on water companies to report on the implementation of the plans, and a requirement for water companies to address the use of nature-based solutions within drainage and sewage management plans. The Government also agreed to a new duty for Ofwat to have regard to the need to contribute to the achievement of Climate Change and Environment Act targets.

Link was successful in coordinating early, proactive engagement with the Sir Jon Cunliffe Water Commission, beginning with [a letter](#) and [briefing](#) in October 2024 which was covered in [national press](#). Link was subsequently invited to a roundtable with Sir Jon to set out priorities and aspirations for the review, and is now represented on the Commission's panel by Richard Benwell. Link was heavily involved in the organisation of the [March for Clean Water](#) (led by River Action), tying this into wider advocacy regarding the Water Bill and the Commission. Link was also significantly involved with delivery of the March on the day, which was attended by 15,000 people and was extensively covered in national press.

Bovine TB

Link's Bovine TB Working Group continues to provide space for eNGOs to discuss and build consensus on the issue of bovine TB, and to coordinate strong joint outputs. 2024 saw Government take a new policy direction on bTB, in line with Link's longstanding position that culling must end. Government announced it would not be taking forward 'targeted badger intervention', a policy which [Link strongly opposed](#). It also announced a refresh of the bTB strategy, and confirmed that no further cull licences will be issued after January 2026. Though we must be attentive to the risk that bTB remains a highly contentious and politicised issue, this change of direction is a significant win.

We have also re-established relationships with the Defra bTB team, and were able to meet for productive discussions through a series of roundtables regarding co-design of the new strategy – previously, a lack of trust between eNGOs and Defra officials meant that a meeting had not taken place in over 2 years. This marks a significant change in ways of working on bTB policy; engagement with Defra and work to influence the bTB strategy refresh will continue to be priorities for the group in 2025.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

In 2024, Link's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Working Group has continued to support the sector in implementing the Route Map, including through delivering targeted support for small eNGOs via our ['SEEDS' programme](#). The 'Small eNGO Ethnic Diversity Support' (SEEDS) programme was developed in partnership with leadership consultancy Full Colour, with funding from Natural England. The 18-month programme includes 1-2-1 advice sessions, training and resources to help enable and equip smaller organisations to break down barriers and progress on their ethnic diversity journey. Temperature check surveys with the first trial cohort, which began in 2024 and will continue until summer 2025, have revealed that the scheme is meeting or exceeding expectations for the vast majority of participants. Work began in 2024, and will continue in 2025, to develop proposals for upscaling the programme.

The Route Map is now supported by over 50 organisations, and the EDI Working Group attended regularly by over 35 organisations. In July 2024, Link supported delivery of [The RACE Summit](#), a full-day in-person EDI event in London led by SOS-UK and attended by over 100 people. On the day, Link led a workshop on engaging senior leadership. This will be an area of ongoing focus in 2025, with plans to deliver a series of CEO roundtables to reaffirm commitment to the Route Map and to build networks at senior leader level.

Invasive Non-native Species

In 2024 the group published a report 'Stemming the flood of invasive species' building on previous work and exploring how flooding can spread invasive species. We received significant media attention during INNS week. The report was featured in the Defra Stakeholder Forum event presentation. Very recently the INNS and Animal Welfare groups collaborated to submit evidence to the EFRA inquiry on Biosecurity at the Border and sent a letter to the EAC to ask that they conduct another review or investigation into the slow progress of INNS. A win for the group in 2024 was confirmation that the Non-Native Species Inspectorate has been made a permanent recourse – a longstanding priority of the group.

The group will now focus on increasing the powers for inspectors to allow them to be able to check for INNS effectively at the border. We intend this to be the focus of INNS week 2025, as well as a story mapping recorded INNS in SSSI in England. Additional ongoing work seeks to monitor management of INNS in freeports. We must maximise the opportunity we have with Baroness Hayman of Ullock as Minister for Biosecurity as she has an interest in the area and wants to make improvements to speed up progress.

Trees and Woodland

In 2024 the trees and woodlands group published two briefings outlining our positions on [woodland management](#) and [woodland creation](#). A briefing on ancient woodland will be published very soon. Two Link Blogs were published by the group in 2024: [More Trees Please](#) and [COP promises on forests must be delivered, at home and overseas](#). The group are engaged across a variety of link work streams and are keen to secure a ministerial site visit. One focus has been on the green skills gap this year, meeting with HMT in autumn, coordinated by Lauren and the education group and meeting with Skills England. There is also now a quarterly check-in with the Forestry Commission on their upcoming 10-year skills strategy. Link now has a seat in the Forestry Commission Delivery Advisory Group which PTES attend on our behalf.

In 2025 the group secured an in-person site visit to Broughton Estate in May to view the rewilding and tree planting work and are coordinating inviting Defra civil servants to join. We are hopeful that we will be able to gain a seat in the UK Tree Planting Taskforce this year.

Safeguarding legal mechanisms to protect nature

The Legal Strategy Group continued to make the case for the [Environmental Rights Bill](#) in 2024. This draft piece of legislation, drafted for Link, ClientEarth, the RSPB and Friends of the Earth by David Wolfe KC and Kate Cook of Matrix Chambers in 2023, would establish in UK law a human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment for everyone. The Bill was included as a Nature 2030 Link campaign ask, and the Liberal Democrats included the Bill in their 2024 General Election Manifesto. Link produced an [updated briefing](#) on the Bill during the General Election campaign.

As well as this propositional work, Link continues to support members of the group to engage with the Aarhus process for ensuring environmental rights, and to work to improve [UK compliance](#) with the convention. In December 2024, the group submitted a full [response](#) to the Government's consultation on ways to improve compliance and [wrote](#) to the Government to highlight opportunities to advocate for Aarhus principles at the Council of Europe. The group also submitted a [response](#) to the Government's call for evidence on possible changes to judicial review for planning decisions recommended by the Banner Review.

Tackling wildlife crime

The Wildlife Crime Working Group published its eighth annual [Wildlife Crime Report](#) in November 2024, presenting a snapshot of the scale and causes of wildlife crime in 2023 and calling for reforms to legislation, policing and sentencing to better tackle these offences. The report received media coverage in the [Independent](#) and on LBC news, and an executive summary was distributed at the UK Wildlife Crime Enforcers Conference. The group has followed up these calls with letters proposing reforms to the [Home Office](#), [Sentencing Council](#) and to the [Crown Prosecution Service](#).

The group also engaged with the Metropolitan Police, following their decision to scale down their wildlife crime unit, and secured a retained dedicated point of contact for environmental organisations wishing to raise wildlife crime concerns with the Met.

Raising the bar for animal welfare standards

The first few months of 2024 saw the group [support](#) a legal ban on live exports to finally get over the line. This was achieved in May, when the Animal Welfare (Livestock Exports) Act 2024 passed into law. Progress has also been made on another long standing welfare and environmental ask, for a ban on lead ammunition use. After years of Link input to strengthen recommendations, UK REACH submitted proposals for a lead ammunition ban to Defra in December 2024. Link coordinated [letters](#) to the UK, Scottish and Welsh Governments calling on them for these recommendations to be accepted, with a shorter transition period than that recommended by REACH. Defra is due to make a decision soon. More broadly, the group has [written](#) to the new Government to set out how it could deliver further effective welfare reforms.

The group has also been working to ensure effective implementation of the win it secured in 2023, additions to the Online Safety Act to require social media companies to prevent animal cruelty content on their platforms. [Two submissions](#) have been sent to Ofcom to assist them in implementing these requirements.

Ensuring a healthy natural environment and access to nature for all

The Nature and Wellbeing Strategy Group (NWSG) continues to advocate for access to nature for all. In 2024, NWSG published a response to the Play Commission's Call for Evidence on the value of (outdoor) play for children and a briefing on public access in ELM in collaboration with Link's Agriculture group. NWSG continues to take opportunities forward to build on the commitment in the Government's Environmental Improvement Plan to ensure all people live within a 15-minute walk of a green or blue space. This includes stakeholder sessions with Defra and Natural England, parliamentary events, access to nature statistics, and more. The NWSG has also been involved in online sessions and discussions for green social prescribing and continues to influence government policies to ensure sustained funding and policy focus on nature-based well-being initiatives.

The Nature and Wellbeing Strategy Group developed a strong shared position on extending public access rights, accompanied by responsibilities and good management for nature. This position has been embedded in Link's advocacy work ahead of the general election, including a [mini-manifesto on People and Nature](#).

Advocating for robust sites and species protections

Building on the new Government's commitment to review the Environmental Improvement Plan, the Nature Policy Working Group published a [briefing](#) on action needed within the first 100 days of the new Government to meet 2030 species targets.

The group also published the annual [Link progress report](#) on meeting the target to protect at least 30% of England's land for nature by 2030 (also known as 30x30). The report secured significant media coverage and parliamentary attention. Link's advocacy on 30x30 contributed to the Government recognising that protected sites in unfavourable and declining condition should not count towards the 30% target and the new Government commitment to publish a delivery strategy for 30x30 on land in 2025.

Link's work advocating for boosting nature in Protected Landscapes, including National Parks and National Landscapes, through the 30x30 report and [separate briefings](#), helped secure a commitment by the Government in December 2024 for legislative reform to help boost nature recovery in these areas.

Link also worked alongside ELUK colleagues to advocate for robust domestic implementation of 30x30 and other international biodiversity targets, around the international nature conference COP16 in October 2024. Link published an [updated policy progress tracker](#) on all the Global Biodiversity Framework targets in England.

Towards a sustainable farming future

Link continues to bring a range of organisations together to advocate for nature-friendly farming, hosting fortnightly agriculture advocacy meetings with Green Alliance, to share intelligence and plan joint interventions. A notable intervention took place in December, when Link and over forty other organisations came together to [call](#) for more funding for Environmental Land Management schemes and for supply chains reforms, securing extensive media [coverage](#).

Link's Agriculture Group has made a series of complementary policy interventions, including [two briefings](#) setting out next steps for ELMS schemes and a [call](#) for reforms to the permitting system for intensive livestock farming.

Ensuring clean healthy and thriving seas

Our focus for the Marine Group in 2024 was largely on marine spatial planning and the impacts of offshore energy infrastructure. This saw us effectively oppose the Offshore Licensing Bill of the previous government as well as secure a sustainable development duty in The Crown Estate Bill which will help ensure offshore wind does not damage marine nature. We also published a major report concerning "[Planning Ahead on Land and Sea](#)" to help set the agenda for protecting marine nature in the planning system.

We also sought to protect Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) from damaging fishing and industrial activity. We published our [30x30 Progress Report](#) noting the minimal progress in protecting MPAs from bottom-towed fishing gear and calling for swift action. This was supported by responding to a major call for evidence on fishing in MPAs.

Protecting marine mammals

Much of the work of the Marine Mammals Group focused on the meeting of the International Whaling Commission (IWC), IWC69. We provided effective [briefings](#) to Defra. This helped ensure 2024 IWC negotiations saw positive developments compared to recent years with an anti-whaling resolution being passed, quorum numbers being reached, and a pro-conservation stance being well represented. We also continued to influence the UK Government's approach to whale-hunting nations through letters and advocacy through Defra.

We produced a significant [briefing](#) on the reforms to wildlife legislation needed to protect marine mammals, which is being used to influence Defra work on marine mammal protection as well as parliamentary engagement.

Circular Economy

Link's renamed Circular Economy Group published a [Circular Economy Roadmap](#) with three key asks, including establishing a joint Defra/DESNZ Joint Circular Economy Unit. Defra has since announced the establishment of a cross-department, cross-industry Circular Economy Taskforce, a direct achievement of advocacy by the group. This provides a strong opportunity to accelerate progress on circular economy policy. We also prepared a more specific paper on [financial incentives to grow the circular economy](#).

All regulations for the Collection and Packaging Reforms are now in law. We pushed the Government to remain focused on fast, effective implementation of these reforms through submissions to the Secondary Legislation Scrutiny Committee and briefings for parliamentarians ahead of debates on the regulations. Our [briefings](#) were used directly in parliamentary debates.

We also coordinated NGO work on the Global Plastics Treaty and successfully advocated for the new Labour Government to take an ambitious stance in negotiations.

Structure, Governance and Management

Leadership

Link's Board of Trustees, and its Finance and Resources Sub Committee, each held four meetings during 2024.

In 2024, Marcus Gilleard served the maximum of three terms on the Board of Trustees and stepped down in December 2024. Both Sandy Luk and Nadia Shaikh served two terms, and both also stepped down in December 2024. Dominic Dyer served two terms on the Board of Trustees and was re-elected for a further one year at Link's 2024 AGM. Link welcomed one new Board member, Adam Royle.

The organisation is a charitable company limited by guarantee, incorporated on 7 December 1999 and registered as a charity on 5 January 2005. Members of the Board of Trustees are Directors for the purpose of Company Law and Trustees for the purpose of Charity Law. Members who served during the year, and up to the date of this report, are set out on Page 3.

The company was established under a Memorandum of Association which established the objects and powers of the charitable company and is governed under its Articles of Association. In 2007 the Memorandum and Articles of Association were reviewed, both to ensure compliance with the Companies Act (2006) and Charities Act (2006). Recognising the need to update the Articles, a further review was carried out in 2017/18 and the updated Articles were agreed upon by members at a special General Meeting on 22 May 2020.

Under the Articles, the members of the Board of Trustees are elected by a postal vote in advance or by secret ballot at the Annual General Meeting. Members of the Board of Trustees must retire at the third Annual General Meeting after that at which he or she was first elected, and is eligible for re-election for up to a further term ending on the sixth Annual General Meeting after their first election. The Treasurer must retire at the Annual General Meeting every three years but may stand for re-election with no maximum term of office.

Risk Management

Wildlife and Countryside Link views the management of risk as an integral element of its governance processes. The major risks to which the charity is exposed, as identified by Link's Director and Trustees, are reviewed annually with systems in place to mitigate those risks. It is recognised that any control system can only provide reasonable, but not absolute, assurance that major risks have been managed adequately.

The two main risks and uncertainties that face the charity, as identified in the Risk Register, include risks to income and reputation. Link aims to mitigate these risks by scrutinising the finances through the Finance and Resources Sub-Committee, by diversifying our funding sources, horizon scanning with members, non-members and other stakeholders, and regularly communicating with our member organisations to ensure they are updated, engaged and benefitting from their membership of Link.

The Link team adheres to protocols and procedures, with the finances being closely monitored to ensure expenditure is appropriate and within reasonable limits, and that adequate resources are in place. Link's Communications Manager also works with our Director and Trustees to reduce potential risks to Link's reputation.

Wildlife and Countryside Link has a health and safety policy to provide adequate control of the health and safety risks arising from our work activities. Each new joiner is given an induction in the most up to date health & safety policy.

Diversity, equality and inclusion

Link is committed to being an inclusive workplace and to helping the environmental sector become more diverse and representative. At the end of year 2024, Link had 11 staff including the CEO and a Board of 8 members.

- Six staff are female with a gender ratio of 55% female to 45% male, 67% male on SMT
- Of the 11 staff members, all identified as heterosexual.
- Of the 8 Board members, 3 are female (38%) and 5 males (62%)
- No Board members have reported disabilities or medical conditions
- Two staff members are in their 40s, three in their 30s and six (55%) in their 20s
- Data on ages of Board members is not available
- Data on staff and Board sexual orientation is unavailable

Pay Policy for senior staff

The Trustees consider that the Board of Trustees and the senior management team comprise the key management personnel of the charity in charge of directing and controlling, running and operating the Charity on a day-to-day basis. Day-to-day operational responsibility is delegated from Trustees to the CEO and senior team. All Trustees give their time freely and one Trustee received remuneration for additional consultancy work done for one of Link's working groups. Details of Trustees' expenses and related party transactions are disclosed in Note 6 to the accounts.

We have reviewed the pay and rewards given to staff to ensure we give fair terms in line with other similar organisations. One member of staff received a total amount of £70,000-80,000.

Preparation of the report

This report has been prepared taking advantage of the small companies' exemption of section 415A of the Companies Act 2006.

Exemptions from Disclosure

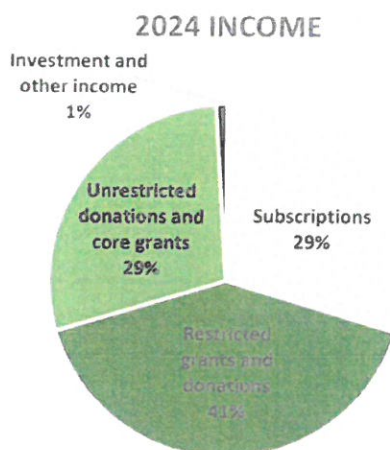
There are no exemptions required.

Funds held as custodian Trustee on behalf of others

Link does not have a custodian Trustee.

Financial Review

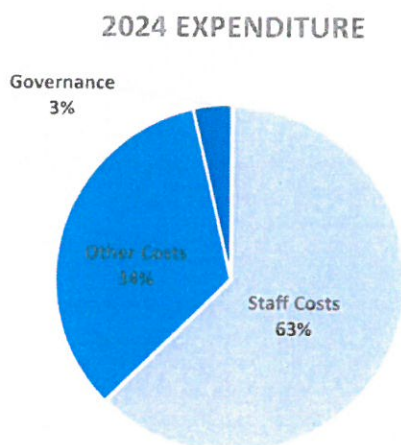
Here we summarise financial information to give an overview of the charity's financial performance during 2024, by using selected information from the full annual accounts. The full accounts are set out at page 19 and thereafter.



Link's total income in 2024 was £909,221 (2023 £738,240). Member subscriptions for the year totaled £269,197 (2023 £258,469).

During 2024, a number of restricted grants contributed towards funding the ongoing implementation of Link's five-year Strategy 2020-25.

A number of restricted donations from both members and the public were received towards the Restore Nature Now event held in June 2024. A couple of restricted grants received in 2024 are for project work due to be carried out in 2025.



Link's total expenditure amounted to £843,406 (2023 £603,600).

Total expenditure on staff costs totaled £528,167. As in past years, this does not take account of the contribution made to Link's collaborative work by staff within our member organisations, who help us to achieve so much.

These results show that Link has and continues to develop a secure financial model based on member subscriptions with a level of grants that allow Link to maximise its effectiveness for its members.

Reserves Policy

Link's Reserve policy is to maintain free reserves of six months operating expenditure, over a rolling period of three years. This allows Link's Board of Trustees to maximise the use of the financial reserves but demands a plan to achieve the policy. At 31 December 2024, free reserves (in the general fund) amounted to 12.04 months of total 2024 expenditure. This level of reserves will allow Link to continue to implement the current interim Strategy.

Grants

Link secured valuable grant funding in 2024 to support its work with members for the next couple of years. Link received the final payment from the European Climate Foundation towards Nature 2030, and confirmed a second one from them also for Nature 2030, as well as confirmed two grants towards Impact 2024, one from Green Alliance and one from the Samworth Foundation. The final payment from the New to Nature scheme was also received. Two new multiyear grants were confirmed, one from the Lund Trust and one from The Sigrid Rausing Trust. The first payments for these two grants were received in 2024 but will be used for work due to be carried out in 2025.

This is in addition to the existing core grants funding received from Esmée Fairbairn Foundation for 2022 to 2025, the final year for Helvellyn Foundation and the Treebeard Trust (2022 to 2024). This unrestricted core funding will help support the salary costs of the core team, including part of the Link's CEO, Director of Impact and Operations, Media and Campaigns manager, Chemical policy officer, Nature 2030 Policy and Engagement Officer and Director of advocacy. The unrestricted funding also covered the salary costs for a Policy and Advocacy advisor, Policy officers and Admin & Finance officer. These unrestricted funds, in addition to other unrestricted core income from member subscriptions, are essential for Link's core policy work that helps the organisation deliver on its own objectives on areas such as wildlife crime, marine, the freshwater environment, agriculture, and nature and wellbeing.

Some of the restricted grants secured went to support particular salaries and projects, including part of the CEO's, Director of Advocacy, Director of Impact and Operations, Chemical policy officer and the Media and Campaigns manager salaries for their work on Nature 2030, Impact 2024 and Chemical policy work. The remaining grant from the New to Nature scheme covered the salary cost of a work placement for a Nature 2030 Policy and Engagement Officer.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all of those individuals and organisations that made 2024 such a great year for Link, including our members, partners, funders and colleagues. With their generous support, we will continue to work hard in 2025 and beyond to conserve and protect wildlife and the countryside.

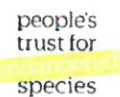
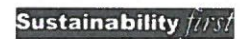
Preparation of the report

This report has been prepared taking advantage of the small companies' exemption of section 415A of the Companies Act 2006. It was approved, and authorised for issue, by the Trustees on 9 June 2025 and signed on its behalf by:



Martin Spray CBE, Chair of Wildlife & Countryside Link

Members







Independent Examiners Report to the Trustees of Wildlife and Countryside Link

Independent examiner's report to the trustees of Wildlife and Countryside Link ('the Company')

I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the accounts of the Company for the year ended 31st December 2024.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity's trustees of the Company (and also its directors for the purposes of company law) you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 ('the 2006 Act').

Having satisfied myself that the accounts of the Company are not required to be audited under Part 16 of the 2006 Act and are eligible for independent examination, I report in respect of my examination of your charity's accounts as carried out under Section 145 of the Charities Act 2011 ('the 2011 Act'). In carrying out my examination I have followed the Directions given by the Charity Commission under Section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act.

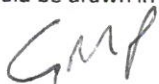
Independent examiner's statement

Since your charity's gross income exceeded £250,000 your examiner must be a member of a listed body. I can confirm that I am qualified to undertake the examination because I am a member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales, which is one of the listed bodies.

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the Company as required by Section 386 of the 2006 Act; or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records; or
3. the accounts do not comply with the accounting requirements of Section 396 of the 2006 Act other than any requirement that the accounts give a true and fair view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination; or
4. the accounts have not been prepared in accordance with the methods and principles of the Statement of Recommended Practice for accounting and reporting by charities (applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102)).

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



Richard Appleyard FCA
Gibbons Mannington & Phipps LLP Chartered Accountants
20 Eversley Road
Bexhill-on-Sea
East Sussex
TN40 1HE

Date 02/09/2025

WILDLIFE AND COUNTRYSIDE LINK

**STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2024**

	Notes	Unrestricted fund £	Restricted funds £	2024 Total funds £	<i>2023 Total funds £</i>
INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS FROM					
Donations and legacies	2	260,404	149,023	409,427	<i>345,491</i>
Charitable activities	4				
Charitable Activities		269,197	221,427	490,624	<i>385,955</i>
Investment income	3	8,931	-	8,931	<i>6,349</i>
Other income		239	-	239	<i>445</i>
Total		538,771	370,450	909,221	<i>738,240</i>
EXPENDITURE ON					
Charitable activities	5				
Charitable Activities		486,669	356,737	843,406	<i>603,600</i>
NET INCOME		52,102	13,713	65,815	<i>134,640</i>
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS					
Total funds brought forward		735,225	29,152	764,377	<i>629,737</i>
TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD		787,327	42,865	830,192	<i>764,377</i>

CONTINUING OPERATIONS

All income and expenditure has arisen from continuing activities.

The notes form part of these financial statements

WILDLIFE AND COUNTRYSIDE LINK

BALANCE SHEET **31ST DECEMBER 2024**

	Notes	Unrestricted fund £	Restricted funds £	2024 Total funds £	2023 Total funds £
FIXED ASSETS					
Tangible assets	12	1,123	-	1,123	481
CURRENT ASSETS					
Debtors	13	27,569	-	27,569	19,287
Cash at bank and in hand		859,370	79,882	939,252	778,703
		886,939	79,882	966,821	797,990
CREDITORS					
Amounts falling due within one year	14	(100,737)	(37,015)	(137,752)	(34,094)
NET CURRENT ASSETS		786,202	42,867	829,069	763,896
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES		787,325	42,867	830,192	764,377
NET ASSETS		787,325	42,867	830,192	764,377
FUNDS	16				
Unrestricted funds				787,325	735,225
Restricted funds				42,867	29,152
TOTAL FUNDS				830,192	764,377

The charitable company is entitled to exemption from audit under Section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 for the year ended 31st December 2024.

The members have not required the company to obtain an audit of its financial statements for the year ended 31st December 2024 in accordance with Section 476 of the Companies Act 2006.

The trustees acknowledge their responsibilities for

- ensuring that the charitable company keeps accounting records that comply with Sections 386 and 387 of the Companies Act 2006 and
- preparing financial statements which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company as at the end of each financial year and of its surplus or deficit for each financial year in accordance with the requirements of Sections 394 and 395 and which otherwise comply with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 relating to financial statements, so far as applicable to the charitable company.

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to charitable companies subject to the small companies regime.

The financial statements were approved by the Board of Trustees and authorised for issue on 9TH JUNE 2025 and were signed on its behalf by:



M Spray - Trustee

The notes form part of these financial statements

WILDLIFE AND COUNTRYSIDE LINK

**CASH FLOW STATEMENT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2024**

	Notes	2024 £	2023 £
Cash flows from operating activities			
Cash generated from operations	1	<u>153,115</u>	<u>129,275</u>
Net cash provided by operating activities		<u>153,115</u>	<u>129,275</u>
Cash flows from investing activities			
Purchase of tangible fixed assets		<u>(1,497)</u>	-
Interest received		<u>8,931</u>	<u>6,349</u>
Net cash provided by investing activities		<u>7,434</u>	<u>6,349</u>
Change in cash and cash equivalents in the reporting period		<u>160,549</u>	<u>135,624</u>
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the reporting period		<u>778,703</u>	<u>643,079</u>
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the reporting period		<u><u>939,252</u></u>	<u><u>778,703</u></u>

The notes form part of these financial statements

WILDLIFE AND COUNTRYSIDE LINK

**NOTES TO THE CASH FLOW STATEMENT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2024**

1. RECONCILIATION OF NET INCOME TO NET CASH FLOW FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES

	2024	2023
	£	£
Net income for the reporting period (as per the Statement of Financial Activities)	65,815	134,640
Adjustments for:		
Depreciation charges	855	2,369
Interest received	(8,931)	(6,349)
(Increase)/decrease in debtors	(8,282)	4,810
Increase/(decrease) in creditors	103,658	(6,195)
Net cash provided by operations	153,115	129,275

2. ANALYSIS OF CHANGES IN NET FUNDS

	At 1/1/24	Cash flow	At 31/12/24
	£	£	£
Net cash			
Cash at bank and in hand	778,703	160,549	939,252
	778,703	160,549	939,252
Total	778,703	160,549	939,252

The notes form part of these financial statements

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2024

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

Basis of preparing the financial statements

The financial statements of the charitable company, which is a public benefit entity under FRS 102, have been prepared in accordance with the Charities SORP (FRS 102) 'Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2019)', Financial Reporting Standard 102 'The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland' and the Companies Act 2006. The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention.

Income

All income is recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities once the Charity has entitlement to the funds, it is probable that the income will be received and the amount can be measured reliably.

Subscription income from full and associate member organisations is invoiced on a calendar year basis and is recognised accordingly.

Grants are recognised as income in the Statement of financial activities in accordance with the terms attached by the grantor.

Income from recharged costs is accrued when the associated costs are incurred. Other donations and sundry income are recognised in the Statement of financial activities when received.

Expenditure

Expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis and has been classified under headings that aggregate all cost related to the category. Where costs cannot be directly attributed to particular headings they have been allocated to activities on a basis consistent with the use of resources.

Governance costs are those incurred in connection with compliance with constitutional and statutory requirements.

Tangible fixed assets

Depreciation is provided at the following annual rates in order to write off each asset over its estimated useful life.

Plant and machinery	- 4 years
Fixtures and fittings	- 4 years
Computer equipment	- 4 years

All assets costing more than £1,000 are capitalised.

Taxation

The charity is exempt from corporation tax on its charitable activities.

Fund accounting

Unrestricted funds can be used in accordance with the charitable objectives at the discretion of the trustees.

Restricted funds can only be used for particular restricted purposes within the objects of the charity. Restrictions arise when specified by the donor or when funds are raised for particular restricted purposes.

Further explanation of the nature and purpose of each fund is included in the notes to the financial statements.

Pension costs and other post-retirement benefits

The charitable company operates a defined contribution pension scheme. Contributions payable to the charitable company's pension scheme are charged to the Statement of Financial Activities in the period to which they relate.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2024

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES - continued

Operating leases

Rentals under operating leases are charged to the Statement of financial activities on a straight line basis over the lease term.

Cash at bank and in hand

Cash at bank and in hand includes cash and short term highly liquid investments with a short maturity of three months or less from the opening of the deposit.

Debtors

Debtors are recognised at their recoverable amounts to which the charity is entitled.

Creditors

Creditors are recognised where the charity has a present obligation resulting from a past event that will probably result in the transfer of funds to a third party and the amount due to settle the obligation can be measured or estimated reliably. Creditors are normally recognised at their settlement value.

2. DONATIONS AND LEGACIES

	2024	2023
	£	£
Donations	157,024	23,488
Grants for core funding	252,403	322,003
	<u>409,427</u>	<u>345,491</u>

3. INVESTMENT INCOME

	2024	2023
	£	£
Deposit account interest	8,931	6,349

4. INCOME FROM CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

	2024	2023
	£	£
Subscriptions	269,197	258,469
Grants for project work	221,427	127,486
	<u>490,624</u>	<u>385,955</u>

5. CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES COSTS

	Direct Costs (see note 6) £	Support costs (see note 7) £	Totals £
Charitable Activities	<u>813,097</u>	<u>30,309</u>	<u>843,406</u>

WILDLIFE AND COUNTRYSIDE LINK

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2024

6. DIRECT COSTS OF CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

	2024	2023
	£	£
Staff costs	528,167	460,497
Payroll management	1,134	753
Insurance	10,059	1,331
Rent, rates & electricity	37,815	34,840
Sundries	533	42
Publications, research and reports	15,196	21,790
Consultant fees	128,715	36,358
Subscriptions expense	14,071	2,382
Events	35,636	10,645
Communications	12,205	9,818
IT Technical Support	10,386	9,137
IT software and consumables	2,710	1,565
Travel and subsistence	6,075	4,242
Office maintenance & repairs	2,550	2,983
Staff training	6,990	2,380
Depreciation	855	2,369
	<u>813,097</u>	<u>601,132</u>

7. SUPPORT COSTS

	Governance costs
	£
Charitable Activities	<u>30,309</u>

Support costs, included in the above, are as follows:

	2024	2023
	Charitable Activities	Total activities
	£	£
Preparation of statutory accounts	1,328	1,240
Independent examination	1,240	1,208
Legal and professional fees	27,731	-
Bank charges	10	20
	<u>30,309</u>	<u>2,468</u>

8. NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE)

Net income/(expenditure) is stated after charging/(crediting):

	2022	2021
	£	£
Depreciation - owned assets	<u>3,330</u>	<u>3,329</u>

WILDLIFE AND COUNTRYSIDE LINK

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2024

9. TRUSTEES' REMUNERATION AND BENEFITS

Consultancy fees were paid to Nadia Shaikh of £3,860 during the year (2023 £3,020) in respect of helping to run the PSN & Raven's working group.

Trustees' expenses

Expenses were reimbursed to one trustee during the year of £226.21 (2022 £319).

10. STAFF COSTS

	2024	2023
	£	£
Wages and salaries	460,350	403,939
Social security costs	44,128	36,210
Other pension costs	23,689	20,348
	<u>528,167</u>	<u>460,497</u>

The average monthly number of employees during the year was as follows:

	2024	2023
	12	11
Staff members	<u>12</u>	<u>11</u>

One employee received remuneration of between £70,000 and £80,000 in the year (exclusive of employer pensions and employer National Insurance contributions). (2024: One employee was paid between £60,000 and £70,000). The employer pension contributions for that member of staff amounted to £4,293 in the year.

The key management personnel of the Charity comprise all staff members. The total employee benefits of the key management personnel of the Charity were as disclosed above.

11. COMPARATIVES FOR THE STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

	Unrestricted fund £	Restricted funds £	Total funds £
INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS FROM			
Donations and legacies	322,803	22,688	345,491
Charitable activities			
Charitable Activities	258,469	127,486	385,955
Investment income	6,349	-	6,349
Other income	49	396	445
Total	<u>587,670</u>	<u>150,570</u>	<u>738,240</u>
EXPENDITURE ON			
Charitable activities			
Charitable Activities	414,983	188,617	603,600
NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE)	172,687	(38,047)	134,640
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS			
Total funds brought forward	562,537	67,200	629,737

WILDLIFE AND COUNTRYSIDE LINK

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2024

11. COMPARATIVES FOR THE STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES - continued

	Unrestricted fund £	Restricted funds £	Total funds £
TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD	735,224	29,153	764,377

12. TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

	Plant and machinery £	Fixtures and fittings £	Computer equipment £	Totals £
COST				
At 1st January 2024	5,159	6,000	2,160	13,319
Additions	-	-	1,497	1,497
At 31st December 2024	5,159	6,000	3,657	14,816
DEPRECIATION				
At 1st January 2024	5,098	5,697	2,043	12,838
Charge for year	61	303	491	855
At 31st December 2024	5,159	6,000	2,534	13,693
NET BOOK VALUE				
At 31st December 2024	-	-	1,123	1,123
At 31st December 2023	61	303	117	481

13. DEBTORS: AMOUNTS FALLING DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR

	2024 £	2023 £
Trade debtors	14,867	7,700
Other debtors	7,445	7,445
Prepayments	5,257	4,142
	27,569	19,287

14. CREDITORS: AMOUNTS FALLING DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR

	2024 £	2023 £
Trade creditors	25,157	3,455
Social security and other taxes	11,511	12,662
Pensions	2,441	2,824
Grants in advance	84,708	-
Accrued expenses	13,935	15,153
	137,752	34,094

WILDLIFE AND COUNTRYSIDE LINK

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2024

15. LEASING AGREEMENTS

Minimum lease payments under non-cancellable operating leases fall due as follows:

	2024	2023
	£	£
Within one year	6,734	34,865
Between one and five years	-	6,733
	<u>6,734</u>	<u>41,598</u>

16. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS

	At 1/1/24	Net movement	At
	£	in funds	31/12/24
	£	£	£
Unrestricted funds			
General fund	735,225	52,100	787,325
Restricted funds			
Environment Links UK	1,382	(369)	1,013
Agriculture	1,079	(370)	709
Blueprint for Water	846	-	846
Planning Coalition	289	-	289
Wildlife Crime and Trade	18	-	18
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	2,850	(1,161)	1,689
Local Nature Recovery Strategies	125	-	125
Chemical Campaign	22,271	3,246	25,517
Raven's Network (name changed from Peer Support Network for People of Colour)	292	179	471
Restore Nature Now Project	-	4,370	4,370
EDI Seed's Scheme	-	7,820	7,820
	<u>29,152</u>	<u>13,715</u>	<u>42,867</u>
TOTAL FUNDS	<u>764,377</u>	<u>65,815</u>	<u>830,192</u>

WILDLIFE AND COUNTRYSIDE LINK

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2024

16. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS - continued

Net movement in funds, included in the above are as follows:

	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	Movement in funds £
Unrestricted funds			
General fund	538,771	(486,671)	52,100
Restricted funds			
Environment Links UK	-	(369)	(369)
Agriculture	-	(370)	(370)
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	1,500	(2,661)	(1,161)
Chemical Campaign	26,375	(23,129)	3,246
New To Nature Scheme	8,477	(8,477)	-
Nature 2030	65,324	(65,324)	-
Raven's Network (name changed from Peer Support Network for People of Colour)	2,022	(1,843)	179
Restore Nature Now Project	123,902	(119,532)	4,370
EDI Seed's Scheme	29,100	(21,280)	7,820
Impact 2024	113,750	(113,750)	-
	<u>370,450</u>	<u>(356,735)</u>	<u>13,715</u>
TOTAL FUNDS	<u>909,221</u>	<u>(843,406)</u>	<u>65,815</u>

Comparatives for movement in funds

	At 1/1/23 £	Net movement in funds £	At 31/12/23 £
Unrestricted funds			
General fund	562,537	172,688	735,225
Restricted funds			
Environment Links UK	1,631	(249)	1,382
Agriculture	1,079	-	1,079
Blueprint for Water	846	-	846
Planning Coalition	289	-	289
Head of Communications	12,888	(12,888)	-
Wildlife Crime and Trade	18	-	18
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	-	2,850	2,850
Green Recovery	174	(174)	-
Local Nature Recovery Strategies	125	-	125
Peer Support Network for People of Colour	150	142	292
Chemical Campaign	50,000	(27,729)	22,271
	<u>67,200</u>	<u>(38,048)</u>	<u>29,152</u>
TOTAL FUNDS	<u>629,737</u>	<u>134,640</u>	<u>764,377</u>

WILDLIFE AND COUNTRYSIDE LINK

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2024

16. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS - continued

Comparative net movement in funds, included in the above are as follows:

	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	Movement in funds £
Unrestricted funds			
General fund	587,670	(414,982)	172,688
Restricted funds			
Environment Links UK	-	(249)	(249)
Head of Communications	-	(12,888)	(12,888)
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	3,100	(250)	2,850
Green Recovery	-	(174)	(174)
Peer Support Network for People of Colour	3,388	(3,246)	142
Chemical Campaign	5,500	(33,229)	(27,729)
New To Nature Scheme	13,997	(13,997)	-
Nature 2030	124,585	(124,585)	-
	<u>150,570</u>	<u>(188,618)</u>	<u>(38,048)</u>
TOTAL FUNDS	<u>738,240</u>	<u>(603,600)</u>	<u>134,640</u>

Purposes of material restricted funds:

Head of Communications

The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation provided funding for Link's Head of Communications role, particularly to support Link's work in sharing marine conservation policy and messages. This funding has now been spent

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Final payment has been made to the consultancy Full Colour Ltd for our work together to understand and improve ethnic diversity in the environment sector. The funding was kindly provided by the John Ellerman Foundation, Natural England, the Joseph Rowntree Trust, and the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation.

Chemical Campaign

The Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and the Savitri Trust provided essential core support for a new chemicals campaign, intended to strengthen the regulation of toxic chemicals in the UK. The campaign particularly focuses on river pollution. Most of the funding has been spent commissioning the Rivers Trust to undertake mapping and analysis of contaminants including pesticides, pharmaceuticals and "forever chemicals", using Environment Agency data. Additional funds have spent to produce a produce shared parliamentary briefings and consultation responses, and to host an event on chemicals with UK Youth For Nature, advocating better monitoring and management of chemical pollution.

Nature 2030

This is Link's General Election campaign, consisting of public campaigning, policy and advocacy for the regulation and investment needed to halt nature's decline by 2030.

New to Nature

This is an inclusion scheme, funded by Government and facilitated by Groundwork, aimed at increasing diversity in the environment sector. These funds contribute to the salary of Link's New to Nature trainee.

16. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS - continued

Restore Nature Now

Dedicated member contributions, individual donations, revenue from t-shirt sales and grant funding via the Environmental Funder's Network enabled the delivery of the Restore Nature Now March in June 2024. This was the largest ever nature and climate gathering in the UK with between 60,000-100,000 participants, and the most collaborative piece of work between traditional environmental NGOs and direct action groups to date.

SEEDS (Small eNGO Ethnic Diversity Support Scheme)

Natural England provided crucial funding for a trial cohort for the SEEDS scheme and funding to develop a proposal for an enhanced scheme. This has provided tailored support and bespoke 1-2-1 advice for 9 organisations on readying their organisation to improve ethnic diversity within their staffing and a proposal on upscaling the programme to support a further 50 organisations.

Impact 2024

The joint project between Green Alliance, The Climate Coalition, and Link provided a senior sectoral space for strategic discussion and collaboration with intelligence sharing, political analysis and strategy, and influence collaboration. The project was kindly funded by multiple environmental funders with Link receiving £33,750 from the project towards our Nature 2030 campaign sector co-ordination.

17. RELATED PARTY DISCLOSURES

Other than as disclosed in note 9 to the accounts, there were no related party transactions for the year ended 31st December 2024 or 31st December 2023.

18. GUARANTEE BY MEMBERS OF THE COMPANY

Every member of the Company agrees to contribute to the Company £1 or any smaller amount if required if:-

- (a) The Company is wound-up while he or she is a member or within a year afterwards; and
- (b) The Company has debts and liabilities which it cannot meet out of its assets.

WILDLIFE AND COUNTRYSIDE LINK

England & Wales - Charity number 1107460

Accounts

Wildlife and
Countryside



Wildlife and Countryside Link

(A company limited by guarantee)

Company number: 03889519

Annual Report 2023

The Trustees submit their report together with the financial statements of Wildlife and Countryside Link for the year ended 31 December 2023.

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A Message from Link's Chair

In 2023, Wildlife & Countryside Link brought together the "Nature 2030" campaign, calling on all political parties to step up to the task of halting the decline of wildlife by 2030. Over 100 organisations and 100,000 people have joined the call for action.

First of all, we call for more public spending for nature, chiefly in support of wildlife-friendly farming. As the world gets to grips with rising commodity prices and cost of living, it's more important than ever that we invest in the land-management choices that will help support healthy food production in harmony with nature.

Of course, we know that public spending alone can't fill the budget gap needed for nature's recovery. The private sector has a huge role to play. In Nature 2030, we call for a Nature Recovery Obligation – legal duties on key polluting industries to invest in nature's recovery. This complements the wider work Link has done this year to defend and strengthen key emerging nature markets like biodiversity net gain and nutrient neutrality. In the face of deregulatory proposals, Link successfully defended those markets, while making the case for an increase in ambition and rigorous standards to ensure that these polluter pays mechanisms are really robust.

Third, we called for changes to meet 30x30. Our annual 30x30 report revealed that the Government is still off track in delivering the policies needed to protect at least 30% of the land and sea for nature. To catch up, Nature 2030 proposes practical steps to recover England's great landscapes, to extend protected areas, and more innovative measures like a "public nature estate" - growing the amount of land that is owned by the public sector or managed in the public interest. Along the way, we won important changes to the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (on protected landscapes and local nature recovery), which will help begin this change in management.

Finally, Nature 2030 recognises that everyone needs nature. We call for an Environmental Rights Act, establishing a basic right to a healthy natural environment. In a world where pollution, deprivation and economic and social marginalisation are increasing people's exposure to environmental degradation, a legal right to a healthy environment would help address this social injustice. This work builds on our recent success in securing a commitment from the Government that everyone should have access to a healthy natural environment within 15 minutes' walk of home.

The Nature 2030 campaign forms the policy centerpiece of our work in the run up to a General Election in 2024, alongside brilliant collaborative efforts like *Outdoors for All* and *Animals Matter*.

I know the team hugely appreciate the companionship, support, inspiration and conviction they've found in working with the growing number of Wildlife & Countryside Link members this year. We are tremendously grateful for all the time, dedication and expertise that our members dedicate to working together for the benefit of animals and nature, particularly those who contribute regularly to our working groups.

We look forward to working with you in 2024.



Martin Spray CBE DSc, Chair, Wildlife and Countryside Link

Reference and Administrative Details

Link Trustees

Martin Spray, Chair	(appointed December 2018)
Dominic Dyer	(appointed December 2018)
Marcus Gilleard	(appointed March 2015)
Sandy Luk	(appointed December 2018)
Simon Marsh	(appointed December 2018 / resigned December 2023)
Nadia Shaikh	(appointed December 2021)
Sarah McMonagle	(appointed December 2021 / resigned December 2023)
Allison Ogden-Newton	(appointed December 2021)
Jason Reeves	(appointed December 2021)
Ali Plummer	(appointed December 2023)
Dr James Cooper	(appointed December 2023)
Jemima Child-Clarke	(appointed December 2023)

Company Registered Number

03889519

Charity Registered Number

1107460

Principal Office Address

N101C Vox Studios, 1-45 Durham Street
London
SE11 5JH

Company Secretary and CEO

Dr Richard Benwell

Independent Examiner

Richard Appleyard FCA
GMP Chartered Accountants
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Bexhill-on-Sea
TN40 1HE

Bankers

The Co-operative Bank
PO Box 101
1 Balloon Street
Manchester
M60 4EP

Nationwide
5-11 St George's Street
Douglas
Isle of Man
IM99 1RN

Solicitors

Russell-Cooke Solicitors
2 Putney Hill
London
SW15 6AS

Trustees' Report

Objectives and Activities

The charitable objects of Wildlife and Countryside Link are to promote the conservation and protection of wildlife and countryside for the benefit of the public.¹

Link is the largest environment and wildlife coalition in England. We bring together 82 organisations to develop and advocate proposals for improvements in law and policy for the benefit of wildlife and our environment. Our members campaign to conserve, enhance and access our landscapes, habitats, rivers and seas and protect our animals and plants. Together we have the support of over eight million people in the UK and directly protect over 750,000 hectares of land and 800 miles of coastline.

As part of our current strategy:

- We aim to be a **policy powerhouse** for the sector: keeping a broad overview, but targeting a small number of strategic areas where we can generate new, detailed and ambitious policy proposals that will influence policymakers. Our policy groups will forge progressive consensus: aiming for strong, common positions that complement individual members' work.
- We aim to be an **amplifier for our individual voices**: highlighting great work in our membership and lending focus and coherence to our common messages in the press and in political advocacy. Our communications will reflect and reinforce members' communications: creating opportunities for members large and small, as well as providing a collective identity in the media and in Westminster.
- We aim to be a **strategic hub and institutional touchpoint**: providing leadership in agreeing cross-sector strategic direction, supporting our members in Westminster, and acting as a nodal point for working with other groups. Our secretariat will lead and serve: adding value to members' interactions by identifying strategic opportunities, creating alliances and providing professional policy insight.

With a General Election ahead, we aim to ensure that all political parties make clear commitments for nature and animal welfare, capable of improving the lives of animals, and stopping the decline of species abundance by the end of the decade.

We want to play our part in bringing the huge and varied environmental movement together to express people's love of animals and nature in a way that cuts through the short-termism of politics. We will support the sector in coming together in a major public demonstration, we will team up with organisations with strong local networks to support informed doorstep questions and local hustings events focused on nature, and we will ensure that all parties are held to account at national level for their environmental commitments. We will continue to work with close partners in the delivery of this work, including Green Alliance, the Climate Coalition, Sustain, the Nature Friendly Farming Network and others.

At the same time, we will ensure that the day-to-day delivery of environmental ambition is not slowed down by political timelines. The year starts with the Offshore Petroleum Licensing Bill, which we oppose. We will work with Parliamentarians to propose measures to strengthen protection for Marine Protected Areas and to prioritise space for nature and renewable energy generation at sea, rather than expanding fossil fuel industries.

Key animal welfare legislation is also moving forward, with the Animal Welfare (Live Exports) Bill, which would fulfil a long-standing shared campaign, and the Hunting Trophy (Import Prohibition) Bill early in the year. At the same time, we will press for effective implementation of animal welfare provisions in the Online Safety Act,

¹ The Trustees of Wildlife and Countryside Link confirm that the organisation has Charitable Purposes pursuant to the Charities Act 2011. The Trustees believe there are clear and identifiable public benefits arising from the pursuit of Link's aims and objectives, in terms of an enhanced natural environment, more abundant wildlife, and the health wellbeing and economic benefits they bring, and that these benefits are freely available to the public without restriction.

following our successful work on the bill last year.

Both offshore and onshore, strategic planning will be key to ensure that climate change mitigation can go hand-in-hand with nature recovery. Last year, we added to public debate about the need for a Land Use Framework with a detailed description of what an effective framework would include: it should be target-driven, carry weight in planning, permitting and spending decisions, and it should be transparent and adaptable. This year, we will expand on that work with our Planning Ahead project, bringing together climate-focused and nature-focused organisations to ensure that the environment movement stands together against harmful deregulation in planning and in support of reforms that can deliver an integrated climate and nature agenda.

Achievements and Performance

In 2023, Link was at the forefront of public policy debate, working closely with other coalitions to guard against environmentally-harmful policy proposals and to create new opportunities for improvement.

In 2023, Link managed and provided support for 18 groups on the following policy areas:

- Agriculture: Chair, Barnaby Coupe (The Wildlife Trusts); Vice Chair, Alice Groom (RSPB)
- Animal Welfare: Chair, Claire Bass (Humane Society International-UK); Vice Chair, Emily Wilson (Four Paws UK)
- Blueprint for Water: Chair, Ali Morse (The Wildlife Trusts); Vice Chair, Nik Perepelov (RSPB)
- Bovine TB: no Chair
- Chemical Taskforce: no Chair
- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion: Chair, Miriam Bentley-Rose (The Wildlife Trusts), Vice Chair, Meera Inglis (RSPB)
- Invasive Non-Native Species: Co-Chairs: Craig Macadam and David Smith (Buglife)
- Land Use Planning: Chair, Rebecca Pullinger (Woodland Trust); Vice Chair, Carl Bunnage (RSPB)
- Legal Strategy: Co Chairs, Carol Day and Rosie Sutherland (RSPB)
- Local Nature Recovery Strategies: no Chair
- Marine: Chair, Kirsten Carter (RSPB), Vice Chair, Bernadette Butfield (RSPB)
- Marine Mammals: Chair, Lucy Babey (ORCA), Vice Chairs, Sue Fisher (AWI) and Nicola Hodgins (WDC)
- Nature Policy: no Chair
- Nature and Wellbeing: Co Chairs, Sue Young and Dom Higgins (TWT)
- Resources & Waste: Chair, Paula Chin (WWF-UK)
- Trees and Woodlands: Chair, Nick Phillips (Woodland Trust); Vice Chair, Neil Douglas (RSPB)
- Wildlife Crime & Trade: Chair, Dominic Dyer (Born Free); Vice Chair, Craig Fellows (Badger Trust)
- Education and Learning: co-chairs are Suzanne Welch (RSPB), Cat Hickey (ZSL), and Jen Teague (TWT)

Key achievements in 2023 include:

Levelling up the planning system to support nature's recovery

The Land Use Planning Group secured several wins for nature in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act, which passed in November 2023. Link drafted, advocated for, and [won amendments to the Bill](#) to strengthen the duty for local planning authorities to take account of Local Nature Recovery Strategies, preserve the mitigation hierarchy in new Environmental Outcomes Reports, allow water companies to use nature-based solutions to deliver required wastewater treatment upgrades, and introduce new duties and targets for protected landscapes to recover nature. During the passage of the Bill, when the Government introduced amendments to scrap nutrient neutrality rules, [Link lead a rapid and robust cross-sector response](#), working with environmental consultancies, and successfully saw off the Government's damaging proposals.

At the same time, the Land Use Planning Group continued to work on other ongoing policy areas. Ahead of mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain, Link highlighted key implementation concerns in a [briefing](#) to civil servants and in a [letter to the Minister](#), which resulted in Defra clarifying the guidance to reinforce the mitigation hierarchy and committing to publishing a consultation on irreplaceable habitats in 2024. The Group continued to develop its shared positions on infrastructure planning policy, responding to consultation on [energy, road and rail](#), and [fast-track infrastructure](#), and feeding into the National Infrastructure Commission's reports. The Government agreed to develop a strategic plan for energy infrastructure and to review and potentially amalgamate existing

environmental databases, two asks which Link advocated for. The Group also developed, in collaboration with other Link policy groups, a strong shared position on a [land use framework](#) in England.

Blueprint for Water

A key focus for Blueprint in 2023 has been ensuring that water company investment in PR24 delivers maximum environmental benefit. Blueprint continues to be [directly consulted](#) by Ofwat as expert environmental stakeholders, and in 2023 submitted further evidence directly to the [Public Accounts Committee](#) and the [Industry and Regulators Committee](#). Blueprint led and coordinated pushback against the Government's steer to water companies to cap environmental ambition in PR24. This included [writing to the Secretary of State](#), and breaking the story via [national coverage in The Times](#). Blueprint has successfully brought members behind proposals for a new 'Green Duty' for Ofwat and the EA, which we will continue to advocate in 2024. We have also [secured a tripartite meeting](#) with Defra, the EA and Ofwat to discuss greater integration of nature-based solutions in the Price Review.

Blueprint continued to deliver strong, collective policy recommendations to Government via consultations in 2023. Positive outcomes secured include powers for the EA to impose [uncapped penalties](#) on water companies, [greater integration of sustainability](#) into the Growth Duty, and a stronger approach from Ofwat to [regulating performance related pay](#). A [Blueprint briefing on](#) nature-based solutions in the water environment was provided to Government and Opposition parties to make the case for a greater proportion of water sector spending on non-engineered solutions. Blueprint worked alongside other Link policy groups to [successfully oppose](#) the weakening of nutrient neutrality rules under the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act. Blueprint also [led eNGO engagement](#) with the Regional Water Resources Management plans, including a public e-action.

Bovine TB

Link's Bovine TB Working Group continues to provide space and networking for eNGOs to discuss and build consensus on the issue of bovine TB, and to coordinate outputs in this space. 2023 remained a quieter year in terms of Government activity, though has seen some positive developments in commitments by other political parties, such as the Labour Party [confirming a commitment](#) to end culling if elected. The Working Group was able to feed into and develop Badger Trust's [2024 Badger Culling Report](#), which Link and others were able to amplify on social media.

In 2024, the group will continue to act as a forum for engagement and building common ground. The group intends to develop a joint Link response when Government releases proposals on epidemiological culling. Given the topic remains controversial and member views highly polarised, risks around a lack of common ground undermining joint work remain.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

In 2023, Link's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Working Group has focused on coordinating and driving the sector's work to implement the [Route Map](#). We will continue this work in 2024. Through our 3 sub-groups, we have developed best practice guidance on EDI data and reporting and have conducted a gap analysis of EDI training to identify needs. Link has secured, shared and captured external expertise and guidance for our members via workshops and webinars, and through pro bono work with the consultancy Mayvin.

The Route Map is now supported by over 45 organisations, and the EDI Working Group attended regularly by over 30 organisations. Link has committed to financially supporting our [Raven Network](#) – formerly known as the Peer Support Network for People of Colour – for another year and has secured contributions from members towards this. Our [2023 benchmarking report](#) shows that whilst progress is slow for smaller and less well-resourced organisations, significant improvements have been made regarding data, action plans, and funding for EDI work. Link's role in coordinating and leading EDI work continues to be recognised both within and beyond the environment sector; Link spoke on a panel at the [2023 Communicate Conference](#) about the Route Map, and at further webinars hosted by ADEPT and EUROPARC Atlantic Isles.

Invasive Non-native Species

In 2023 the group amplified member work to [ban soil imports](#) by making this the focus of INNS week, with the [press release](#) making national press including in the [Evening Standard](#). A letter was drafted at the end of 2023 and sent the first week of 2024 to the new Biosecurity minister detailing the group's policy recommendations. Most recently the group created a [briefing on Biosecurity and zoonotic diseases](#) for a House of Lords debate. [Baroness Hayman of Ullock references](#) this briefing, including asking if the inspectorate trial will be made permanent, which is a top priority for the group.

A key focus for the INNS group for 2024 will be building on the 2023 work to update the 2020 'Prevention is Better Than Cure report'. This will coincide with INNS week in May and it will strengthen the ask for increased funding and resources for the inspectorate, as well as for local action groups. We are preparing a media story for this event on how flooding can spread invasive freshwater species. Another project for 2024 will be exploring the biosecurity risks associated with freeports. Very recently, Link brought this issue to the attention of the GBNNSS by sending our 2020 briefing on freeports.

Trees and Woodland

The group evolved from a task and finish group established in response to the development of the England Tree Strategy. It was formalised in Spring 2022 to host discussions and share information on the latest trees and woodlands policy developments as well as to facilitate engagement with Defra and other key bodies. The group met quarterly in 2023 to continue to develop the group's goals, structure and decide the best actions. They fed woodland policy steers into the Nature 2030 report and developed a WCL [web page](#).

The first priority of 2024 will be to publish a woodland management briefing which will be the first major output for the group. It will be used to form the group's joint policy position on woodland management to be used for parliamentary and ministerial engagement.

Safeguarding legal mechanisms to protect nature

The Legal Strategy Group launched a major policy in 2023, publishing a draft [Environmental Rights Bill](#). This draft piece of legislation, drafted for Link, ClientEarth, the RSPB and Friends of the Earth by David Wolfe KC and Kate Cook of Matrix Chambers, would establish in UK law a human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment for everyone. The three-part Bill would legally establish a human right to a healthy environment (following a UN Resolution recognising the right to a healthy environment), create a new duty on relevant public authorities to act compatibly with the right and give people the legal tools to challenge public bodies who fail to uphold the right, by fully incorporating rights granted by the UNECE Aarhus Convention into UK law.

The draft Bill was launched at an event in Parliament in June, opened by Environment and Climate Change Committee Chair Baroness Parminter. Advocacy for the proposed legislation is ongoing, with the Bill comprising one of the five asks of Link's [Nature 2030 campaign](#). Members of the Legal Strategy Group continue to call on political parties to commit to the Environmental Rights Bill in their General Election platforms, the Liberal Democrats and Greens have provisionally already agreed to this. This legal reform would constitute a major advance for nature's protection, and for everyone's right to enjoy their local environment. As well as this propositional work, Link continues to support members of the Group to engage with the Aarhus process and [improve UK compliance](#) with the convention.

Tackling wildlife crime

The Wildlife Crime Working Group published its seventh annual [Wildlife Crime Report](#) in December 2023, presenting a snapshot of the scale and causes of wildlife crime in 2022. The report was launched at an event in Parliament, featuring speeches from the Shadow Defra Spokesperson Baroness Hayman and from the Chief Inspector of the National Wildlife Crime Unit, Kevin Kelly. The 2023 report focused on a key policy ask – for political parties to commit to making key Wildlife Crimes recordable in their General Election platforms.

The Wildlife Crime Working Group has also been working to support the '[Time for Change](#)' campaign, led by the

League Against Cruel Sports, to tighten up the Hunting Act 2004 and effectively ban trail hunting. There are strong signals that some political parties will commit to a trail hunting ban in 2024, if elected. Further work from the group has sought to hold the MoD [to account](#) for banning hunt observers from their land.

Raising the bar for animal welfare standards

Early 2023 saw many of the proposals from the Government's Animal Welfare Action Plan (May 2021) stalled, with little sign of progression before the General Election. Link's Animal Welfare Group joined with other animal welfare coalitions and organisations in demanding action, leading to the introduction of the Animal Welfare (Livestock Exports) Bill in the autumn to ban live exports of animals after years of delay. The group is supporting efforts to accelerate the Bill through Parliament to ensure it reaches the statute book before the General Election. Link has also been working on efforts to increase the ambition of a new system of [licensing](#) for privately kept primates, and it continues to serve as the secretariat (jointly with WWT) for the [Lead Ammunition All Party Parliamentary Group](#), raising awareness in Westminster of the animal welfare impacts of lead ammunition use.

The Animal Welfare Group also led advocacy on the Online Safety Bill, arguing that the legislation should be used to crack down on online content showing animal abuse, including the growing and disturbing trend of online 'monkey torture videos'. Link's work with parliamentarians led to [two amendments](#) being won at Lords report stage in June 2023. This pressure led the Government to completely concede – in September the Government [amended the Bill](#) to require social media companies to prevent animal cruelty content being online at all. This was Link's original ask with the Bill, secured after eighteen months of sustained advocacy.

Ensuring a healthy natural environment and access to nature for all

Following last year's public campaign Nature for Everyone, the Nature and Wellbeing Strategy Group continued to advocate in 2023 for access to nature for all. Despite good cross-sector pressure from Link working with the Better Planning Coalition, the access to nature amendment in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act lost by just two votes in the Lords. However, Link's campaigning and advocacy work on access to nature played a role in securing a new commitment in the Government's Environmental Improvement Plan published in 2023 to ensure all people live within a 15-minute walk of a green or blue space.

The Nature and Wellbeing Strategy Group developed a strong shared position on extending public access rights, accompanied by responsibilities and good management for nature. This position has been embedded in Link's advocacy work ahead of the general election, including a [mini-manifesto on People and Nature](#).

Advocating for robust sites and species protections

The Nature Policy Working Group published the [annual Link report](#) in September 2023 on Government's progress towards meeting the target to protect at least 30% of land by 2030. The report was launched in September with an online event with experts, civil servants and eNGOs. The Group's evidence submissions to the OEP on [nature recovery](#) and on [protected sites](#) were influential and recognised in the OEP's outputs highlighting the gap between the Government's commitments and action to deliver the Environmental Improvement Plan. Link also worked alongside ELUK colleagues to advocate for robust domestic implementation of 30x30 and other COP15 targets in 2022. On the one-year anniversary of the Global Biodiversity Framework agreed at COP15, Link published a [policy progress tracker](#) on all the GBF targets in England. This policy work and a [letter to the Secretary of State](#) was instrumental in influencing the 30x30 map and criteria published by Defra at the end of 2023. The Government recognised that the whole of protected landscapes could not automatically contribute to 30x30, and that sites have to both be under good management and in recovering ecological condition to count towards 30x30.

Following the passage of the REUL Act, the Nature Policy Group has also worked to reinforce the importance of the key environmental regulations, with a [briefing](#) on improving the implementation of the Habitats Regulations and by working with Greener UK on scrutinising the Government's use of REUL Act powers.

Nature 2030 campaign

In July 2023, WCL launched the Nature 2030 campaign to help ensure the delivery of nature's recovery by 2030. Through the use of high lift and drumbeat moments the campaign has worked with Link members and partners to embed the Nature 2030 proposals in the work and election manifestos of member organisations and frame the next general election as a tipping point for nature's recovery in the UK.

The initial phase of the campaign focused on securing signatures from members of the public as part of an open letter directed towards party leaders. As of January 2024, this e-action has received over 100,000 signatures and through a joint campaign with RSPB the policy proposals have been directed towards representatives in every constituency in England. The campaign was launched at an event in parliament, attended by politicians including then-current Defra Minister Trudy Harrison MP, Alex Sobel MP, Sir Ed Davey MP and Caroline Lucas MP, as well as CEOs of members and partners and over 100 representatives of nature and climate organisations, as well as print and broadcast media.

Throughout 2023, Wildlife and Countryside Link undertook regular media and comms work to drive members to promote the e-action and raise the profile of nature at the next election. This included work around the 30x30 Report, Environmental Rights Anniversaries, the State of Nature Report, FOIs to Defra on progress towards 30x30, the Global Biodiversity Framework targets tracker and a series of essays from authors, environmentalists and nature and climate influencers.

Working across the sector and beyond, the Nature 2030 campaign has seen over 100 organisations sign up as partners. These have included organisations outside of Link members with focuses on health, access and youth work.

Through social media, Nature 2030 posts featured regularly on Wildlife and Countryside Link and partner accounts. With 151 posts and a combined reach of 535,626 on Link only channels. Partner organisations shared hundreds of posts and media influencers including, Ellie Goulding and Chris Packham shared posts related to the campaign.

In 2024, the campaign will continue to develop in advance of the next general election and work with partners, as well organisations such as The Climate Coalition, to mobilise action for nature and climate. Over the next year, through Nature 2030, Wildlife and Countryside Link will continue its program of drumbeat moments in the media and across socials and create a bespoke platform of events. These will include supporting a mass nature and climate demonstration, a series of local and national hustings events, convening a policy response group and the development of a mass lobby post-election.

Towards a sustainable farming future

The Link Agriculture group continued to exert its strategic influence on Environmental Land Management policy, regulations and advice. In terms of regulation, Link has served as a leading joint voice of the eNGO sector. We have put forward a strong shared position on hedgerow regulations and slurry rules. An important leverage point for regulations was the end to cross-compliance, and Link delivered blogs, parliamentary briefings and advocacy to raise political and public awareness of this gap in protections that puts farm biodiversity and ecosystems at risk.

The group has also consistently advocated for better funding, advice and support within the Sustainable Farming Incentive and other Environmental Land Management schemes. Government has acknowledged the force of our influence, and we have seen increases to payment rates for high-value actions for nature as well as promises of a future Sustainable Farming Advice Scheme.

Reducing the chemical pollution burden

The Chemicals Taskforce uniquely brings together different chemicals perspectives to deliver impactful sectoral coordination on cross-cutting issues. The Taskforce's niche is driving political and policy advocacy on these topics, while delivering research and campaigns that raise public awareness. Link chemicals research has been published in major media outlets, raising awareness on chemicals in veterinary medicines, pesticides in rivers and PFAS in fish.

The Taskforce's response to the Industry and Regulators Committee call for evidence on the role of UK regulators was cited in the Committee's report and we have continued to call for increased scrutiny and independence of chemicals regulators for the benefit of the environment and human health. Link serves as an eNGO representative on the UK Chemicals Stakeholder Forum Steering Group and continues to advocate for our policy asks in this forum.

Ensuring clean healthy and thriving seas

Our focus for the Marine Group in 2023 was largely on marine spatial planning and the impacts of offshore energy infrastructure, which will continue in the run up to the General Election. We started the year [engaging parliamentarians on the issue of delivering MPAs](#) which fed into a large piece of work on the [principles for marine spatial planning](#). This saw some of our biggest member organisations starting to shape a vision for nature, the face of a crowded seascape and set the tone for a more sustained effort in the renewables space.

We sought to respond to a consultation on the [33rd seaward licencing round appropriate assessments](#) which enabled us to rapidly response to the Government's Offshore Petroleum Licensing Bill with a [popular briefing](#) on how we prevent further damage to our seas. Our efforts have directly [informed debate in the House of Lords](#) and we anticipate our amendment to the OLP Bill to be accepted after the third reading. Through our propositional work on 'Planning Ahead,' we expect to see similar engagement across industry and parliamentarians with our offshore renewables work in the months to come.

Protecting marine mammals

The Marine Mammals Working Group (MMWG) welcomed [the EFRA Committee](#) report into the health of marine mammals at the beginning of 2023. The [Government's subsequent rejection](#) of all the committee's recommendations led to a [letter to the Secretary of State](#) and an intense period of engagement with Defra officials. From these conversations, the MMWG established a sister group with legal colleagues from [Cet Law](#) and [Earth Justice](#) to undertake a piece of legislative gap analysis to inform Defra's policy development moving forwards.

We continued our engagement with the [International Whaling Commission](#) and are about to send a letter to the Prime Minister of Iceland to provide solidarity in favour of ending whaling licences in the country in the face of extreme lobbying. Our engagement with Defra on bycatch issues remains consistent and we are feeding into the upcoming Bycatch Mitigation Initiative Implementation Plan. We also prepared a response to the Government consultation on [Remote Electronic Monitoring](#) and foresee further parliamentary engagement on the topic when the Government publish their response.

Resources and Waste

The Resources and Waste Group has continued to focus on the reduction of resource consumption, working to tackle the problem from source to sea. Our sustained efforts on the [issue of disposable vapes](#), lead to the publication of a [Call for Evidence, Government consultation](#) and subsequent UK-wide ban of their sale. With WCL's Blueprint for Water Group, we delivered a [response to a consultation](#) on the proposed ban of the sales of wet wipes containing plastics and engaged parliamentarians cross-party with our subsequent briefing. We continue to influence the delivery of Defra's Collection and Packaging Reforms, pushing to ensure the [policies are operationalised with a circular economy](#) at their core.

The Resources and Waste Group Chair has recently been appointed, alongside Green Alliance, to represent the e-NGO sector on the pEPR Shadow Scheme Administrator which will continue our leadership, influence, and interrogation of the Government's proposals in this space. As we turn towards 2024, our focus will return to the [delivery of DRS](#), problematic littered plastics and the Global Plastics Treaty negotiations which are due to conclude at the end of the year.

Structure, Governance and Management

Leadership

Link's Board of Trustees, and its Finance and Resources Sub Committee, each held four meetings during 2023.

In 2023, Marcus Gilleard served the maximum of three terms on the Board of Trustees and was re-elected for a further one year at Link's 2023 AGM. Dominic Dyer served his first term on the Board of Trustees and was re-elected for his second term at Link's 2023 AGM. We welcome two new Board members and a new Treasurer: Ali Plummer, Dr James Cooper and Jemima Child – Clarke.

The organisation is a charitable company limited by guarantee, incorporated on 7 December 1999 and registered as a charity on 5 January 2005. Members of the Board of Trustees are Directors for the purpose of Company Law and Trustees for the purpose of Charity Law. Members who served during the year, and up to the date of this report, are set out on Page 3.

The company was established under a Memorandum of Association which established the objects and powers of the charitable company and is governed under its Articles of Association. In 2007 the Memorandum and Articles of Association were reviewed, both to ensure compliance with the Companies Act (2006) and Charities Act (2006). Recognising the need to update the Articles, a further review was carried out in 2017/18 and the updated Articles were agreed upon by members at a special General Meeting on 22 May 2020.

Under the Articles, the members of the Board of Trustees are elected by a postal vote in advance or by secret ballot at the Annual General Meeting. Members of the Board of Trustees must retire at the third Annual General Meeting after that at which he or she was first elected, and is eligible for re-election for up to a further term ending on the sixth Annual General Meeting after their first election. The Treasurer must retire at the Annual General Meeting every three years but may stand for re-election with no maximum term of office.

Risk Management

Wildlife and Countryside Link views the management of risk as an integral element of its governance processes. The major risks to which the charity is exposed, as identified by Link's Director and Trustees, are reviewed annually with systems in place to mitigate those risks. It is recognised that any control system can only provide reasonable, but not absolute, assurance that major risks have been managed adequately.

The two main risks and uncertainties that face the charity, as identified in the Risk Register, include risks to income and reputation. Link aims to mitigate these risks by scrutinising the finances through the Finance and Resources Sub-Committee, by diversifying our funding sources, horizon scanning with members, non-members and other stakeholders, and regularly communicating with our member organisations to ensure they are updated, engaged and benefitting from their membership of Link.

The Link team adheres to protocols and procedures, with the finances being closely monitored to ensure expenditure is appropriate and within reasonable limits, and that adequate resources are in place. Link's Communications Manager also works with our Director and Trustees to reduce potential risks to Link's reputation.

Wildlife and Countryside Link has a health and safety policy to provide adequate control of the health and safety risks arising from our work activities. Each new joiner is given an induction in the most up to date health & safety policy.

Diversity, equality and inclusion

Link is committed to being an inclusive workplace and to helping the environment sector become more diverse and representative. At the end of year 2023, Link had 12 staff including the CEO and a Board of 10 members.

- Eight staff are female with a gender ratio of 67% female to 33% male, 66% male on SMT
- Of the 10 Board members, 5 are female (50%) and 5 male (50%)
- One staff member is from an ethnic minority background
- One Board member is from an ethnically diverse background

- One staff member has reported disabilities or medical conditions
- No Board members have reported disabilities or medical conditions
- Two staff members are in their 40s, four in their 30s and six (50%) in their 20s
- Data on ages of Board members is not available
- Data on staff and Board sexual orientation is unavailable

Pay Policy for senior staff

The Trustees consider that the Board of Trustees and the senior management team comprise the key management personnel of the charity in charge of directing and controlling, running and operating the Charity on a day-to-day basis. Day-to-day operational responsibility is delegated from Trustees to the CEO and senior team. All Trustees give of their time freely and no Trustee received remuneration in the year. Details of Trustees' expenses and related party transactions are disclosed in Note 6 to the accounts.

We have reviewed the pay and rewards given to staff to ensure we give fair terms in line with other similar organisations. One member of staff received a total emolument of £60,000-70,000.

Preparation of the report

This report has been prepared taking advantage of the small companies' exemption of section 415A of the Companies Act 2006.

Exemptions from Disclosure

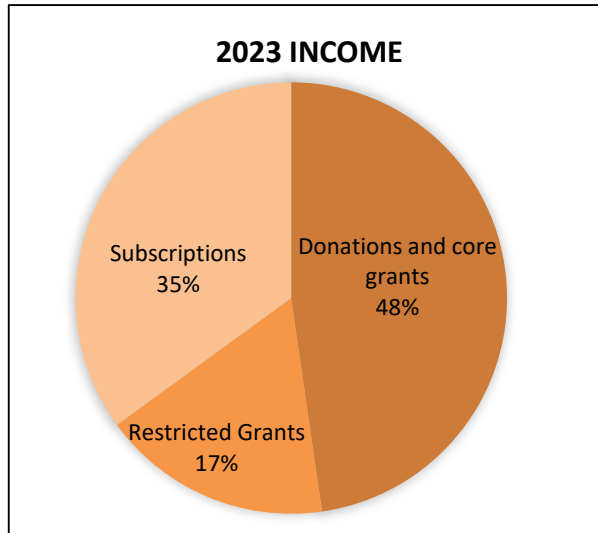
There are no exemptions required.

Funds held as custodian Trustee on behalf of others

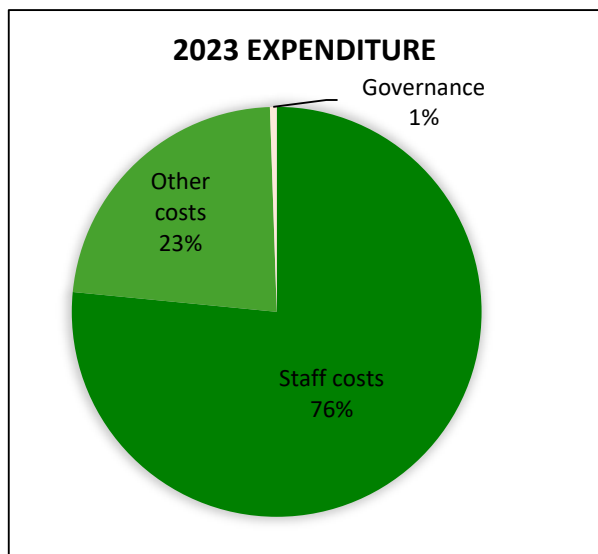
Link does not have a custodian Trustee.

Financial Review

Here we summarise financial information to give an overview of the charity's financial performance during 2023, by using selected information from the full annual accounts. The full accounts are set out at page 19 and thereafter.



During 2023, a number of restricted grants contributed towards funding the ongoing implementation of Link's five year Strategy 2020-25. Link's total income in 2023 was £738,240 (2022 £589,596). Member subscriptions for the year totaled £258,469 (2022 £225,880).



Link's total expenditure amounted to £603,600 (2022 £542,179).

Total expenditure on staff costs totaled £460,497. As in past years, this does not take account of the contribution made to Link's collaborative work by staff within our member organisations, who help us to achieve so much. These results show that Link has and continues to develop a secure financial model based on member subscriptions with a level of grants that allow Link to maximise its effectiveness for its members.

Reserves Policy

Link's Reserve policy is to maintain free reserves of six months operating expenditure, over a rolling period of three years. This allows Link's Board of Trustees to maximise the use of the financial reserves but demands a plan to achieve the policy. At 31 December 2023, free reserves (in the general fund) amounted to 12.42 months of total 2023 expenditure. This level of reserves will allow Link to continue to implement the current interim Strategy.

Grants

Link secured valuable grant funding in 2023 to support its work with members for the next several years. Link confirmed a three-year unrestricted grant from Samworth Foundation for 2023 to 2025, one from Nature Positive Partnership towards the Nature Positive campaign as well as received the final payment of the two-year grant from Green Alliance towards Impact 2024 and a restricted grant from Network for Social Change toward the Nature 2030 campaign. Several uplifts were received in 2023 due to the cost-of-living crisis for existing grants with two uplifts from Esmee Fairbairn Foundation, one restricted for the chemical campaign and one unrestricted towards general costs and the running of Link, and one from John Ellerman Foundation to cover the increased cost on some EDI work.

This is in addition to the existing core grants funding received from Esmee Fairbairn Foundation for 2022 to 2025, Helvellyn Foundation and the Treebeard Trust both for 2022 to 2025 and John Ellerman Foundation for 2021 to 2023 which was the final year for that grant. This unrestricted core funding will help support the salary costs of the core team, including Link's CEO, Head of advocacy, Communication manager, Media and Campaigns manager, Policy and Advocacy advisor, Policy officers and Admin and Finance officer. These unrestricted funds, in addition to other unrestricted core income from member subscriptions, are essential for Link's core policy work that helps the organisation deliver on its own objectives on areas such as wildlife crime, the freshwater environment, agriculture, and nature and wellbeing.

Link also secured restricted funds to support particular salary costs and projects, including a two year restricted grant from the European Climate Foundation for 2023 to 2024 towards the Nature 2030 campaign, a two year restricted grant from the New to Nature scheme for 2023 to 2024 to cover the salary costs of a work placement policy officer role, as well as an existing grant from Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation to support the Head of Communications salary.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all of those individuals and organisations that made 2023 such a great year for Link, including our members, partners, funders and colleagues. With their generous support, we will continue to work hard in 2024 and beyond to conserve and protect wildlife and the countryside.

Preparation of the report

This report has been prepared taking advantage of the small companies' exemption of section 415A of the Companies Act 2006. It was approved, and authorised for issue, by the Trustees on 06/06/24..... and signed on its behalf by:



.....
Martin Spray CBE, Chair of Wildlife & Countryside Link

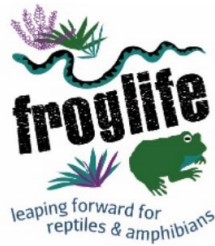
Members



Wildlife and
Countryside



Institute of Fisheries Management



Council for
British Archaeology



Wildlife and
Countryside



INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT TO THE TRUSTEES OF WILDLIFE AND COUNTRYSIDE LINK

Independent examiner's report to the trustees of Wildlife and Countryside Link ('the Company')

I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the accounts of the Company for the year ended 31st December 2023.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity's trustees of the Company (and also its directors for the purposes of company law) you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 ('the 2006 Act').

Having satisfied myself that the accounts of the Company are not required to be audited under Part 16 of the 2006 Act and are eligible for independent examination, I report in respect of my examination of your charity's accounts as carried out under Section 145 of the Charities Act 2011 ('the 2011 Act'). In carrying out my examination I have followed the Directions given by the Charity Commission under Section 145(5) (b) of the 2011 Act.

Independent examiner's statement

Since your charity's gross income exceeded £250,000 your examiner must be a member of a listed body. I can confirm that I am qualified to undertake the examination because I am a member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales, which is one of the listed bodies.

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the Company as required by Section 386 of the 2006 Act; or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records; or
3. the accounts do not comply with the accounting requirements of Section 396 of the 2006 Act other than any requirement that the accounts give a true and fair view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination; or
4. the accounts have not been prepared in accordance with the methods and principles of the Statement of Recommended Practice for accounting and reporting by charities (applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102)).

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



Richard Appleyard FCA
Gibbons Mannington & Phipps LLP
Chartered Accountants
20 Eversley Road
Bexhill-on-Sea
East Sussex
TN40 1HE

21st June 2024

WILDLIFE AND COUNTRYSIDE LINK

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2023

	Notes	Unrestricted fund £	Restricted funds £	2023 Total funds £	2022 Total funds £
INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS FROM					
Donations and legacies	2	322,803	22,688	345,491	226,515
Charitable activities	4				
Charitable Activities		258,469	127,486	385,955	362,379
Investment income	3	6,349	-	6,349	702
Other income		49	396	445	-
Total		<u>587,670</u>	<u>150,570</u>	<u>738,240</u>	<u>589,596</u>
EXPENDITURE ON					
Charitable activities	5				
Charitable Activities		<u>414,983</u>	<u>188,617</u>	<u>603,600</u>	<u>542,179</u>
NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE)		172,687	(38,047)	134,640	47,417
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS					
Total funds brought forward		<u>562,537</u>	<u>67,200</u>	<u>629,737</u>	<u>582,320</u>
TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD		<u><u>735,224</u></u>	<u><u>29,153</u></u>	<u><u>764,377</u></u>	<u><u>629,737</u></u>
CONTINUING OPERATIONS					
All income and expenditure has arisen from continuing activities.					

The notes form part of these financial statements

WILDLIFE AND COUNTRYSIDE LINK

BALANCE SHEET 31ST DECEMBER 2023

	Notes	Unrestricted fund £	Restricted funds £	2023 Total funds £	2022 Total funds £
FIXED ASSETS					
Tangible assets	12	481	-	481	2,850
CURRENT ASSETS					
Debtors	13	19,087	200	19,287	24,097
Cash at bank and in hand		748,770	29,933	778,703	643,079
		767,857	30,133	797,990	667,176
CREDITORS					
Amounts falling due within one year	14	(33,113)	(981)	(34,094)	(40,289)
NET CURRENT ASSETS		734,744	29,152	763,896	626,887
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES		735,225	29,152	764,377	629,737
NET ASSETS		735,225	29,152	764,377	629,737
FUNDS	16				
Unrestricted funds				735,225	562,537
Restricted funds				29,152	67,200
TOTAL FUNDS				764,377	629,737

The charitable company is entitled to exemption from audit under Section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 for the year ended 31st December 2023.

The members have not required the company to obtain an audit of its financial statements for the year ended 31st December 2023 in accordance with Section 476 of the Companies Act 2006.

The trustees acknowledge their responsibilities for

- ensuring that the charitable company keeps accounting records that comply with Sections 386 and 387 of the Companies Act 2006 and
- preparing financial statements which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company as at the end of each financial year and of its surplus or deficit for each financial year in accordance with the requirements of Sections 394 and 395 and which otherwise comply with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 relating to financial statements, so far as applicable to the charitable company.

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to charitable companies subject to the small companies regime.

The financial statements were approved by the Board of Trustees and authorised for issue on
and were signed on its behalf by:


.....
M Spray - Trustee

The notes form part of these financial statements

WILDLIFE AND COUNTRYSIDE LINK**CASH FLOW STATEMENT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2023**

	Notes	2023 £	2022 £
Cash flows from operating activities			
Cash generated from operations	1	129,275	32,217
Net cash provided by operating activities		129,275	32,217
Cash flows from investing activities			
Interest received		6,349	702
Net cash provided by investing activities		6,349	702
Change in cash and cash equivalents in the reporting period		135,624	32,919
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the reporting period		643,079	610,160
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the reporting period		778,703	643,079

The notes form part of these financial statements

WILDLIFE AND COUNTRYSIDE LINK**NOTES TO THE CASH FLOW STATEMENT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2023****1. RECONCILIATION OF NET INCOME TO NET CASH FLOW FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES**

	2023	<i>2022</i>
	£	<i>£</i>
Net income for the reporting period (as per the Statement of Financial Activities)	134,640	<i>47,417</i>
Adjustments for:		
Depreciation charges	2,369	<i>3,330</i>
Interest received	(6,349)	<i>(702)</i>
Decrease/(increase) in debtors	4,810	<i>(12,682)</i>
Decrease in creditors	(6,195)	<i>(5,146)</i>
Net cash provided by operations	<u>129,275</u>	<i><u>32,217</u></i>

2. ANALYSIS OF CHANGES IN NET FUNDS

	At 1/1/23 £	Cash flow £	At 31/12/23 £
Net cash			
Cash at bank and in hand	643,079	135,624	778,703
	<u>643,079</u>	<u>135,624</u>	<u>778,703</u>
Total	<u>643,079</u>	<u>135,624</u>	<u>778,703</u>

The notes form part of these financial statements

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

Basis of preparing the financial statements

The financial statements of the charitable company, which is a public benefit entity under FRS 102, have been prepared in accordance with the Charities SORP (FRS 102) 'Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2019)', Financial Reporting Standard 102 'The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland' and the Companies Act 2006. The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention.

Income

All income is recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities once the Charity has entitlement to the funds, it is probable that the income will be received and the amount can be measured reliably.

Subscription income from full and associate member organisations is invoiced on a calendar year basis and is recognised accordingly.

Grants are recognised as income in the Statement of financial activities in accordance with the terms attached by the grantor.

Income from recharged costs is accrued when the associated costs are incurred. Other donations and sundry income are recognised in the Statement of financial activities when received.

Expenditure

Expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis and has been classified under headings that aggregate all cost related to the category. Where costs cannot be directly attributed to particular headings they have been allocated to activities on a basis consistent with the use of resources.

Governance costs are those incurred in connection with compliance with constitutional and statutory requirements.

Tangible fixed assets

Depreciation is provided at the following annual rates in order to write off each asset over its estimated useful life.

Plant and machinery	- 4 years
Fixtures and fittings	- 4 years
Computer equipment	- 4 years

All assets costing more than £1,000 are capitalised.

Taxation

The charity is exempt from corporation tax on its charitable activities.

Fund accounting

Unrestricted funds can be used in accordance with the charitable objectives at the discretion of the trustees.

Restricted funds can only be used for particular restricted purposes within the objects of the charity. Restrictions arise when specified by the donor or when funds are raised for particular restricted purposes.

Further explanation of the nature and purpose of each fund is included in the notes to the financial statements.

Pension costs and other post-retirement benefits

The charitable company operates a defined contribution pension scheme. Contributions payable to the charitable company's pension scheme are charged to the Statement of Financial Activities in the period to which they relate.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2023
1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES - continued**Operating leases**

Rentals under operating leases are charged to the Statement of financial activities on a straight line basis over the lease term.

Cash at bank and in hand

Cash at bank and in hand includes cash and short term highly liquid investments with a short maturity of three months or less from the opening of the deposit.

Debtors

Debtors are recognised at their recoverable amounts to which the charity is entitled.

Creditors

Creditors are recognised where the charity has a present obligation resulting from a past event that will probably result in the transfer of funds to a third party and the amount due to settle the obligation can be measured or estimated reliably. Creditors are normally recognised at their settlement value.

2. DONATIONS AND LEGACIES

	2023	2022
	£	£
Donations	23,488	298
Grants for core funding	322,003	226,217
	<u>345,491</u>	<u>226,515</u>

3. INVESTMENT INCOME

	2023	2022
	£	£
Deposit account interest	6,349	702
	<u>6,349</u>	<u>702</u>

4. INCOME FROM CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

		2023	2022
	Activity	£	£
Subscriptions	Charitable Activities	258,469	225,880
Grants for project work	Charitable Activities	127,486	136,499
		<u>385,955</u>	<u>362,379</u>

5. CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES COSTS

	Direct Costs (see note 6)	Support costs (see note 7)	Totals
	£	£	£
Charitable Activities	601,132	2,468	603,600
	<u>601,132</u>	<u>2,468</u>	<u>603,600</u>

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2023**

6. DIRECT COSTS OF CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

	2023	2022
	£	£
Staff costs	460,497	387,389
Payroll management	753	896
Insurance	1,331	1,545
Rent, rates & electricity	34,840	30,334
Sundries	42	67
Publications, research and reports	21,790	30,050
Consultant fees	36,358	47,581
Subscriptions expense	2,382	14,498
Events	10,645	3,842
Communications	9,818	4,623
IT Technical Support	9,137	6,507
IT software and consumables	1,565	2,160
Travel and subsistence	4,242	3,240
Office maintenance & repairs	2,983	1,950
Staff training	2,380	1,643
Depreciation	2,369	3,330
	601,132	539,655

7. SUPPORT COSTS

	Governance costs
	£
Charitable Activities	2,468

Support costs, included in the above, are as follows:

	2023	2022
	Charitable Activities	Total activities
	£	£
Preparation of statutory accounts	1,240	1,190
Accountancy fees	-	288
Independent examination	1,208	1,000
Legal and professional fees	-	26
Bank charges	20	20
	2,468	2,524

8. NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE)

Net income/(expenditure) is stated after charging/(crediting):

	2022	2021
	£	£
Depreciation - owned assets	3,330	3,329

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2023
9. TRUSTEES' REMUNERATION AND BENEFITS

Consultancy fees were paid to Nadia Shaikh of £3,020 during the year (2022 £0) in respect of helping to run the PSN working group.

Trustees' expenses

Expenses were reimbursed to one trustee during the year of £226.21 (2022 £319).

10. STAFF COSTS

	2023	2022
	£	£
Wages and salaries	403,939	339,744
Social security costs	36,210	30,193
Other pension costs	20,348	17,452
	<u>460,497</u>	<u>387,389</u>

The average monthly number of employees during the year was as follows:

	2023	2022
	11	11
Staff members	<u>11</u>	<u>11</u>

One employee received remuneration of between £60,000 and £70,000 in the year (exclusive of employer pensions and employer National Insurance contributions). (2023: One employee was paid between £60,000 and £70,000). The employer pension contributions for that member of staff amounted to £4,088 in the year.

The key management personnel of the Charity comprise all staff members. The total employee benefits of the key management personnel of the Charity were as disclosed above.

11. COMPARATIVES FOR THE STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

	Unrestricted fund £	Restricted funds £	Total funds £
INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS FROM			
Donations and legacies	226,446	69	226,515
Charitable activities			
Charitable Activities	225,880	136,499	362,379
Investment income	<u>702</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>702</u>
Total	<u>453,028</u>	<u>136,568</u>	<u>589,596</u>
EXPENDITURE ON			
Charitable activities			
Charitable Activities	<u>325,152</u>	<u>217,027</u>	<u>542,179</u>
NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE)	127,876	(80,459)	47,417
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS			
Total funds brought forward	434,659	147,661	582,320

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2023

11. COMPARATIVES FOR THE STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES - continued

	Unrestricted fund £	Restricted funds £	Total funds £
TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD	<u>562,535</u>	<u>67,202</u>	<u>629,737</u>

12. TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

	Plant and machinery £	Fixtures and fittings £	Computer equipment £	Totals £
COST				
At 1st January 2023 and 31st December 2023	<u>5,159</u>	<u>6,000</u>	<u>2,160</u>	<u>13,319</u>
DEPRECIATION				
At 1st January 2023	<u>4,769</u>	<u>4,197</u>	<u>1,503</u>	<u>10,469</u>
Charge for year	<u>329</u>	<u>1,500</u>	<u>540</u>	<u>2,369</u>
At 31st December 2023	<u>5,098</u>	<u>5,697</u>	<u>2,043</u>	<u>12,838</u>
NET BOOK VALUE				
At 31st December 2023	<u>61</u>	<u>303</u>	<u>117</u>	<u>481</u>
At 31st December 2022	<u>390</u>	<u>1,803</u>	<u>657</u>	<u>2,850</u>

13. DEBTORS: AMOUNTS FALLING DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR

	2023 £	2022 £
Trade debtors	7,700	12,500
Other debtors	7,445	7,508
Prepayments	4,142	4,089
	<u>19,287</u>	<u>24,097</u>

14. CREDITORS: AMOUNTS FALLING DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR

	2023 £	2022 £
Trade creditors	3,455	17,062
Social security and other taxes	12,662	9,830
Pensions	2,824	2,185
Accrued expenses	15,153	11,212
	<u>34,094</u>	<u>40,289</u>

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2023
15. LEASING AGREEMENTS

Minimum lease payments under non-cancellable operating leases fall due as follows:

	2023	<i>2022</i>
	£	<i>£</i>
Within one year	-	14,893
Between one and five years	41,598	-
	41,598	14,893

16. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS

	At 1/1/23 £	Net movement in funds £	At 31/12/23 £
Unrestricted funds			
General fund	562,537	172,688	735,225
Restricted funds			
Environment Links UK	1,631	(249)	1,382
Agriculture	1,079	-	1,079
Blueprint for Water	846	-	846
Planning Coalition	289	-	289
Head of Communications	12,888	(12,888)	-
Wildlife Crime and Trade	18	-	18
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	-	2,850	2,850
Green Recovery	174	(174)	-
Local Nature Recovery Strategies	125	-	125
Peer Support Network for People of Colour	150	142	292
Chemical Campaign	50,000	(27,729)	22,271
	67,200	(38,048)	29,152
TOTAL FUNDS	629,737	134,640	764,377

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2023
16. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS - continued

Net movement in funds, included in the above are as follows:

	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	Movement in funds £
Unrestricted funds			
General fund	587,670	(414,982)	172,688
Restricted funds			
Environment Links UK	-	(249)	(249)
Head of Communications	-	(12,888)	(12,888)
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	3,100	(250)	2,850
Green Recovery	-	(174)	(174)
Peer Support Network for People of Colour	3,388	(3,246)	142
Chemical Campaign	5,500	(33,229)	(27,729)
New To Nature Scheme	13,997	(13,997)	-
Nature 2030	124,585	(124,585)	-
	150,570	(188,618)	(38,048)
TOTAL FUNDS	738,240	(603,600)	134,640

Comparatives for movement in funds

	At 1/1/22 £	Net movement in funds £	At 31/12/22 £
Unrestricted funds			
General fund	434,659	127,878	562,537
Restricted funds			
Environment Links UK	1,631	-	1,631
Agriculture	1,079	-	1,079
Marine Projects	32,344	(32,344)	-
Blueprint for Water	846	-	846
Planning Coalition	289	-	289
Head of Communications	33,899	(21,011)	12,888
Wildlife Crime and Trade	-	18	18
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	27,103	(27,103)	-
European Climate Foundation	29,633	(29,633)	-
Green Recovery	20,687	(20,513)	174
Local Nature Recovery Strategies	-	125	125
Peer Support Network for People of Colour	150	-	150
Chemical Campaign	-	50,000	50,000
	147,661	(80,461)	67,200
TOTAL FUNDS	582,320	47,417	629,737

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2023
16. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS - continued

Comparative net movement in funds, included in the above are as follows:

	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	Movement in funds £
Unrestricted funds			
General fund	453,028	(325,150)	127,878
Restricted funds			
Marine Projects	-	(32,344)	(32,344)
Head of Communications	21,001	(42,012)	(21,011)
Wildlife Crime and Trade	68	(50)	18
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	-	(27,103)	(27,103)
European Climate Foundation	38,206	(67,839)	(29,633)
Green Recovery	-	(20,513)	(20,513)
Local Nature Recovery Strategies	7,293	(7,168)	125
Chemical Campaign	70,000	(20,000)	50,000
	<u>136,568</u>	<u>(217,029)</u>	<u>(80,461)</u>
TOTAL FUNDS	<u>589,596</u>	<u>(542,179)</u>	<u>47,417</u>

Purposes of material restricted funds:
Head of Communications

The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation provided funding for Link's Head of Communications role, particularly to support Link's work in sharing marine conservation policy and messages. This funding has now been spent

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Final payment has been made to the consultancy Full Colour Ltd for our work together to understand and improve ethnic diversity in the environment sector. The funding was kindly provided by the John Ellerman Foundation, Natural England, the Joseph Rowntree Trust, and the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation.

Chemical Campaign

The Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and the Savitri Trust provided essential core support for a new chemicals campaign, intended to strengthen the regulation of toxic chemicals in the UK. The campaign particularly focuses on river pollution. Most of the funding has been spent commissioning the Rivers Trust to undertake mapping and analysis of contaminants including pesticides, pharmaceuticals and "forever chemicals", using Environment Agency data. Additional funds have spent to produce a produce shared parliamentary briefings and consultation responses, and to host an event on chemicals with UK Youth For Nature, advocating better monitoring and management of chemical pollution.

Nature 2030

This is Link's General Election campaign, consisting of public campaigning, policy and advocacy for the regulation and investment needed to halt nature's decline by 2030.

New to Nature

This is an inclusion scheme, funded by Government and facilitated by Groundwork, aimed at increasing diversity in the environment sector. These funds contribute to the salary of Link's New to Nature trainee.

17. RELATED PARTY DISCLOSURES

Other than as disclosed in note 9 to the accounts, there were no related party transactions for the year ended 31st December 2023 or 31st December 2022.

18. GUARANTEE BY MEMBERS OF THE COMPANY

Every member of the Company agrees to contribute to the Company £1 or any smaller amount if required if:-

- (a) The Company is wound-up while he or she is a member or within a year afterwards; and
- (b) The Company has debts and liabilities which it cannot meet out of its assets.

Accounts

Wildlife and
Countryside



Wildlife and Countryside Link

(A company limited by guarantee)

Company number: 03889519

Annual Report 2022

The Trustees submit their report together with the financial statements of Wildlife and Countryside Link for the year ended 31 December 2022.

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A Message from Link's Chair

The world has agreed a new Global Biodiversity Framework. Its mission is to halt and reverse the decline of biodiversity by 2030. But here in the UK and around the world, the decline of nature continues apace.

Alongside this urgent biodiversity agenda, the challenge of creating a healthy natural environment for everyone has never been more at the fore. The UN has recognised the right to a healthy and sustainable environment, but in the UK, we find that one in three people do not have access to nature near home.

At the same time, the challenge of improving animal welfare continues to be squeezed to the political margins. Enforcement of key animal welfare laws remains weak, and implementation of some positive promises has stalled.

All three of these vital components of Link's strategy have been shaken in 2022 by political upheaval and international shocks, from the fallout from Covid-19 to the war in Ukraine.

Yet, in the face of these challenges, our coalition is growing larger and stronger and, together, we have been able to achieve significant changes in law and policy. We are so grateful to our long-standing members for the wonderful work we have done together in 2022. We are also delighted to have welcomed new members into the Wildlife & Countryside Link movement.

There have been some tremendous moments of strength and unity. Link's report on 30x30 was launched in a packed Portcullis House room, with influential political contributions from Ministers and Shadow Ministers. It showed the major gap between promise and delivery, and has clearly focused DEFRA's attention on a credible delivery plan. We continued our work to make the case for additional public investment to meet the 2030 nature targets, and were pleased that the Government responded with the announcement of a new Species Survival Fund, aiming to halt the decline of species abundance.

We were pleased also to see the objective of our Nature for Everyone campaign—to ensure that everyone has equitable access to a healthy environment—was included as a new Government pledge in the first statutory Environmental Improvement Plan.

Link has enjoyed a formative role in the Better Planning Coalition. Together, we were able to secure a rethink of threats to nature in the Planning White Paper. Link amendments on access to nature, environmental outcome reports, the Glover reforms to AONBs and National Parks, and the Nature Recovery Network are now being considered in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill, building on the tremendous partnership that came together in the Nature For Everyone campaign.

In the year ahead, we turn our attention to delivery. The legislative frameworks are in place for much of the welfare, wellbeing and wildlife agenda, but there remain huge gaps in funding, enforcement and implementation.

We also turn our attention to the end of the Parliament and a forthcoming General Election. This time, we cannot afford to accept fluffy promises to do more for animals and ecosystems. To meet the great 2030 challenges, the next Parliament will need to include massive changes in funding, regulation and enforcement. We will be working with all parties to open their eyes to the opportunity that a greener economy, with high standards of animal welfare would bring.

The deadlines really are that close. Link was at the forefront of securing a framework for legally-binding nature targets, which are now almost in place at last. By the end of the next Parliament, the first of these targets—to halt nature's decline by 2030—will need to be met. So, we know we cannot afford to be timid in the days ahead. We will aim to play our part in convening and leading the environment movement to win major new commitments for nature, people's environment, and animal welfare in the year ahead.

We look forward to working with you in 2023.



Martin Spray CBE DSc, Chair, Wildlife and Countryside Link

Reference and Administrative Details

Link Trustees

Martin Spray, Chair	(appointed December 2018)
Dominic Dyer	(appointed December 2018)
Marcus Gilleard	(appointed March 2015)
Sandy Luk	(appointed December 2018)
Simon Marsh	(appointed December 2018)
Nadia Shaikh	(appointed December 2021)
Sarah McMonagle	(appointed December 2021)
Allison Ogden-Newton	(appointed December 2021)
Jason Reeves	(appointed December 2021)

Company Registered Number

03889519

Charity Registered Number

1107460

Principal Office Address

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London
SE11 5JH

Company Secretary and CEO

Dr Richard Benwell

Independent Examiner

GMP Chartered Accountants
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Bexhill-on-Sea
TN40 1HE

Bankers

The Co-operative Bank
PO Box 101
1 Balloon Street
Manchester
M60 4EP

Nationwide
5-11 St George's Street
Douglas
Isle of Man
IM99 1RN

Solicitors

Russell-Cooke Solicitors
2 Putney Hill
London
SW15 6

Trustees' Report

Objectives and Activities

The charitable objects of Wildlife and Countryside Link are to promote the conservation and protection of wildlife and countryside for the benefit of the public.¹

Link is the largest environment and wildlife coalition in England. We bring together 70 organisations to develop and advocate proposals for improvements in law and policy for the benefit of wildlife and our environment. Our members campaign to conserve, enhance and access our landscapes, habitats, rivers and seas and protect our animals and plants. Together we have the support of over eight million people in the UK and directly protect over 750,000 hectares of land and 800 miles of coastline.

As part of our current strategy:

- We aim to be a **policy powerhouse** for the sector: keeping a broad overview, but targeting a small number of strategic areas where we can generate new, detailed and ambitious policy proposals that will influence policymakers. Our policy groups will forge progressive consensus: aiming for strong, common positions that complement individual members' work.
- We aim to be an **amplifier for our individual voices**: highlighting great work in our membership and lending focus and coherence to our common messages in the press and in political advocacy. Our communications will reflect and reinforce members' communications: creating opportunities for members large and small, as well as providing a collective identity in the media and in Westminster.
- We aim to be a **strategic hub and institutional touchpoint**: providing leadership in agreeing cross-sector strategic direction, supporting our members in Westminster, and acting as a nodal point for working with other groups. Our secretariat will lead and serve: adding value to members' interactions by identifying strategic opportunities, creating alliances and providing professional policy insight.

Last year, we swiftly redeployed our day-to-day resources to respond to the changing political situation, focusing reactive attention on fending off unforeseen political risks, such as the deregulatory agendas of the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Bill, risks to the Habitats Regulations, and revision of the Farming Transition programme, and Planning White Paper reforms.

Link has played a lynchpin role in seeing off the worst of the deregulatory proposals, and helping Government re-establish a more constructive path toward delivery of its long-term environmental promises.

These new risks combined with rising financial pressures to mean that many of our members had markedly less capacity than usual to respond and engage with Government consultations and legislation at a time of high demand, following the passage of DEFRA's three framework Acts on Environment, Fisheries and Farming. Link responded by taking on more of the work to draft and coordinate shared consultation responses, ensuring that the environment movement continued to be heard in these important deliberations. We also successfully renewed our work advocating for more public funding for nature's recovery, with the announcement of a significant new Species Survival Fund, dedicated to delivery in the target of halting nature's decline.

¹ The Trustees of Wildlife and Countryside Link confirm that the organisation has Charitable Purposes pursuant to the Charities Act 2011. The Trustees believe there are clear and identifiable public benefits arising from the pursuit of Link's aims and objectives, in terms of an enhanced natural environment, more abundant wildlife, and the health wellbeing and economic benefits they bring, and that these benefits are freely available to the public without restriction.

Objectives and Activities

In the year ahead, we plan to take a much more proposition and positive stance, convening the sector around a new set of ambitious policy proposals designed to ensure the UK is successful in meeting the ambitious targets set out in the Global Biodiversity Framework.

We aim to capitalise on the political leverage afforded by the new, legally-binding target to halt the decline of wildlife by 2030, which Link secured as part in the successful State of Nature campaign.

We hope to convene our members and partners across the environment movement around a small set of “big ideas” for nature’s recovery—including the need for more public investment in nature, regulatory drivers of private investment in nature, green jobs support, land management reform, and people’s rights to a healthy environment. Ahead of the next General Election, we will advocate for these policies with all political parties, and promote them with public campaigns.

The next Parliament is likely to last almost until the deadline of the Global Biodiversity Framework’s 2030 mission, so we hope all political parties will begin the Parliament with a plan to succeed. Through the Parliament, we will continue to report annually on progress toward delivery of the 2030 goals, making collective recommendations for the steps the Government must take to get on track.

Of course, 2023/24 will also be a critical year for designing detailed delivery of the reforms set underway in this Parliament. The detail of programmes like biodiversity gain, Local Nature Recovery Strategies, Species Recovery Plans and Environmental Outcome Reports will be significant in determining on-the-ground results for nature in the years ahead. New policies are needed to kickstart delivery of the Environmental Improvement Plan promise to connect more people with nature. This year will be the last chance for the Government to fulfil the remaining animal welfare commitments made in its manifesto, and to get the new Animal Welfare Committee up and running.

With these many delivery challenges ahead, we will continue to draw on the collective expertise of the sector to ensure that Link supports its members in contributing to the design of these critical delivery details for animal welfare, environmental wellbeing and wildlife recovery.

Achievements and Performance

In 2022, Link was at the forefront of political debate, working closely with other coalitions to guard against the risks of political change and to create new opportunities for improvement.

In 2022, Link managed and provided support for 15 groups on the following policy areas:

- Agriculture: Chair, Christopher Price (Rare Breeds Survival Trust); Vice Chair, Alice Groom (RSPB)
- Animal Welfare: Chair, Claire Bass (Humane Society International-UK); Vice Chair, Emily Wilson (Four Paws UK)
- Blueprint for Water: Chair, Ali Morse (The Wildlife Trusts); Vice Chair, Nik Perepelov (RSPB)
- Bovine TB: no Chair
- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion: Chair, Miriam Bentley-Rose (The Wildlife Trusts), Vice Chair, Meera Inglis (RSPB)
- Invasive Non-Native Species: Co-Chairs: Craig Macadam and David Smith (Buglife)
- Land Use Planning: Chair, Rebecca Pullinger (Woodland Trust); Vice Chair, Carl Bunnage (RSPB)
- Legal Strategy: Co Chairs, Carol Day and Rosie Sutherland (RSPB)
- Local Nature Recovery Strategies: no Chair
- Marine: Chair, Kirsten Carter (RSPB), Vice Chair, Jacques Villemot (RSPB)
- Marine Mammals: Chair, Lucy Babey (ORCA), Vice Chairs, Sue Fisher (AWI) and Nicola Hodgins (WDC)
- Nature Policy: Chair no Chair
- Nature and Wellbeing Strategy Group: Co Chairs, Sue Young and Dom Higgins (TWT)
- Resources & Waste: Chair, Paula Chin (WWF-UK)
- Wildlife Crime & Trade: Chair, Dominic Dyer (Born Free); Vice Chair, Craig Fellows (Badger Trust)

Link also took on new workstreams in 2022, including work on chemical pollution, support for the ban on the use of peat in horticulture (March 2022) and making the case stronger controls on grass burning on upland peat (June 2022), working with Greener UK on briefings (June 2022) and UK Forestry Standard updated content response (December 2022). Key achievements in 2022 include:

Blueprint for Water

Critical plans and strategies for the water environment were published in 2022. Blueprint engaged significantly, submitting consultation responses, including on [Flood Risk Management Plans](#), [River Basin Management Plans](#), and the [PR24 methodology](#), but also through regular engagement with Ofwat and the Environment Agency. Positive changes secured include Ofwat making better use of powers to control water industry dividends, and [environmentally beneficial amendments to abstraction charges](#). Blueprint remains one of few environmental voices meaningfully engaged in these processes.

PR24 continued to be a significant focus in 2022; Blueprint representatives met with water company CEOs to further advocate our [Environmental Manifesto for PR24](#). Storm overflows also remained a focus, with Blueprint [responding critically](#) to the Storm Overflows Discharge Reduction Plan and working with the End Sewage Pollution coalition to [submit a parliamentary briefing](#) challenging the plan. The 2022 drought also saw Link securing [new attention](#) for a story [analysing river flow and water level figures](#), and Blueprint engaging with the National Drought Group [to advocate for](#) more proactive, long-term action to build drought resilience. These areas remain important for Blueprint in 2023.

The Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Bill and the wider deregulatory agenda present significant challenges to water policy, with the risk that we will need to spend significant resource defending existing legislation such as Water Framework Directive Regulations, rather than progressing efforts to better protect and enhance UK waters. The deregulatory risk is also apparent in Government's decision not to follow Link's recommendation of a new target for overall water quality under the Environment Act framework. We have established strong, cross sector consensus on the need for an overarching target and will continue to make the case as the 2027 deadline set by the Water Framework Directive approaches.

Bovine TB

Link's Bovine TB Working Group continues to provide a forum for eNGOs to discuss the issue of bovine TB, and to build consensus around this controversial issue. 2022 was a quieter year in terms of Government activity on bovine TB, and the activity of the Link bTB group, though individual members continued to push – for example, the publication of [new research from Born Free Foundation](#) that found no evidence that the badger cull prevents bTB in cattle, which Link was able to amplify and support on social media. In 2023, the group will continue to act as a forum for organisations to engage and build common ground, and will also be exploring potential joint outputs focused on cattle measures, working to shift the focus of bTB policy away from badgers. Risks and

challenges remain around potential lack of common ground or capacity to engage from member organisations, exacerbated by a lack of Government action or interest in this policy area in 2023.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

With our [Route Map Towards Greater Ethnic Diversity in the Environment Sector](#) published in October 2022, Wildlife and Countryside Link continues to focus on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. Our [working group](#) seeks to address the lack of diversity within the environment sector, taking collective action to understand and to help overcome barriers to delivering change. The route map has had significant impact within the sector, with over 42 organisations pledging their support so far, and work now ongoing to engage wider stakeholders from academia, local authorities, and Government agencies.

Thus far, efforts have focused on the delivery of actions within the route map, through three dedicated sub-groups – on Data & Reporting, Training, and Peer Support, Inclusion and Culture. The group has also been working with a project team from the consultancy [Mayvin](#) to develop ways of working that will ensure sector-wide action on EDI does not lose momentum – a loss of momentum and interest is the main risk to this workstream, in addition to ongoing challenges around lack of funds and resource. In 2023, the group will focus on delivering key outputs from the three sub-group, and developing further actions for the sector for years 2-5 of the route map.

INNS

The Link INNS Group continues to build on our 2020 report '[Prevention is Better Than Cure](#)', raising awareness of the need and advocating for increased funding and resources for tackling invasive species. A 1-year scoping trial of the INNS inspectorate was secured in 2021, and in 2022 this was extended into a 3-year trial – a significant achievement for INNS biosecurity. The group will now continue to advocate for this inspectorate to be made permanent in 2023. Securing the necessary interest and funding from Government in an already crowded environmental policy space will be a significant challenge to achieving this.

2022 saw the group contributing to and reviewing a Government [POSTnote briefing on INNS](#), and also engaging with the [refresh of the GB INNS strategy](#), and the [comprehensive review of species of special concern](#), in all cases calling for a stronger and more precautionary approach to INNS management and biosecurity. The Plant Biosecurity Strategy for GB published in 2022 includes some positive steps but further action will be needed to manage the horticultural pathway. This will be a major focus for the INNS Group in 2023, building on [our response](#) to the plant biosecurity strategy consultation and [our media work](#) in INNS Week 2022.

Safeguarding legal mechanisms to protect nature

The Legal Strategy group made important progress in 2022, when its work helped persuade the Government to make a key concession as the Judicial Review & Courts Act passed through the Parliament. The initial version of the Act had contained a presumption on judges to issue weaker “prospective” and “suspended” quashing orders, instead of legal remedies that overturn unlawful decisions. This presumption would have potentially allowed environmental damage to continue, even after a judge had ruled a decision as unlawful. Link worked with MPs and peers to highlight the dangers of the presumption and built parliamentary opposition to the point whereby the Government caved in and [removed the presumption](#).

The group is keeping a close eye out for any renewed Government attempts to weaken judicial review and access to environmental justice. It is also working on blueprint Environmental Rights Act, which would deliver an enforceable right to a healthy environment. Over the next few months the group will be highlighting how such a right could both drive nature recovery and improve human health outcomes.

The Wildlife Crime Working group published its sixth annual [Wildlife Crime Report](#) (with 2021 figures) in November 2022. The Report secured extensive press coverage, including a segment on BBC Countryfile, and is increasingly seen as the key marker of wildlife crime levels. The group's efforts to make such eNGO-led wildlife crime reports redundant, through enabling Government collection of wildlife crime data by the granting of notifiable status for these crimes, continues. In summer 2022 the group met with Home Office and Defra officials to directly make the case for notifiable status and submitted an [evidence dossier](#) to both departments highlighting police support for this change.

The group continues to press for notifiable status for key wildlife crimes, along with more support for the National Wildlife Crime Unit (which works closely with the group) and for further wildlife crime training for police forces and the Crown Prosecution Service, building on training delivered by group members over recent years. The group also continues to press for thorough investigation of wildlife crime cases, [writing](#) to Defra and relevant police forces to highlight the need for further consideration of suspicious deaths of white-tailed eagles in southern England in 2021 and 2022.

Delivering a post-Brexit framework for high animal welfare standards

Two years on from the Government's Animal Welfare Action Plan (May 2021), progress is mixed. The Link Animal Welfare Strategy group was pleased in 2022 to help see one of the key commitments in the Plan, the Animal Welfare (Sentience) Act, safely onto the statute book. The Act recognises the sentience of animals in UK law and establishes an Animal Sentience Committee to advise policymakers. After working hard with Ministers and parliamentarians to progress and [increase the ambition](#) of the Act (over some opposition from some Conservative backbenchers affiliated with hunting and shooting interests) the group is pressing the Government to now speedily appoint the Animal Sentience Committee.

The opposition to the Animal Welfare (Sentience) Act was overcome in that instance, however it remains a blocker on other Animal Welfare Action Plan proposals, including the Kept Animals Bill (stalled in Parliament since November 2021). The group is working to unblock these measures, including through work to influence upcoming General Election Manifestos. Further ongoing workstreams include attempts to include animal abuse content in the scope of the Online Safety Bill and continued support for the [Lead Ammunition All Party Parliamentary Group](#), set up by [Link and WWT](#) in 2022 to make the case in Parliament for a ban on lead ammunition use on welfare and environmental grounds.

Convening a cross-sector campaign to secure Nature for Everyone which put access on the agenda

In February, Link [launched](#) the Nature for Everyone campaign, aimed at securing legal changes to access to nature in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill. The campaign quickly garnered [support from 90 organisations](#) from across the environment, planning, transport, and health organisations and endorsements from celebrities and politicians, including Steve Backshall, Gillian Burke, Lord Crisp, and Baroness Jones.

Through a public petition which received more than 35,000 signatures, an [open letter](#) to Secretary of State Michael Gove, [research](#) about the declining provision of greenspace in new developments, and several pieces of media coverage at key points over the last year, the campaign has raised public awareness of the legislative opportunity to address environmental inequality through amendments to the Levelling Up legislation.

The campaign has been instrumental in uniting various sectors behind a single ask and raising access to nature up the agenda, successfully securing a commitment from Government in January 2023 to deliver access to nature for all within a 15 minutes of home, a key campaign ask.

The Government's Environmental Improvement Plan [announcement](#) included a commitment to ensure everyone lives within a 15 minute walk of a green or blue space.

As the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill progresses through Parliament and we will continue to apply pressure on Government to consider legal changes to make voluntary standards mandatory and to make Levelling UP nature one of the Bill's core missions, to tackle disparities in access to nature.

Staving off the #AttackonNature and environmental deregulation, including the Retained EU Law (REUL) Bill

The autumn of 2022 saw a rapid political shift. Several high risk proposals arrived in quick succession, including the Retained EU Law (REUL) Bill, relaxed planning requirements in new investment zones and a watering down of Environmental Land Management schemes, which could have all had a highly negative impact on the state of nature in England. The environment sector swiftly branded this an #AttackonNature and banded together to #DefendNature against these proposals. Link convened a cross-sector group to discuss and develop joint messaging and campaigning actions, including a [joint complaint](#) to Defra and the OEP on the Government's breach of the legally-binding deadline to lay the Environment Act targets and a [letter to the PM](#).

The #AttackonNature campaign played its part in persuading incoming PM Rishi Sunak to shelve the worst of the damaging measures proposed by his predecessor. Plans to 'minimise the burden of environmental assessments' in new Investment Zones were dropped and the Review of Environmental Land Management retained the core aspects of the scheme.

However, Rishi Sunak has continued to progress the REUL Bill through Parliament. Link has collaborated closely with Greener UK on advocacy and [briefings](#) to highlight the environmental risks of the REUL Bill to MPs and peers, urging them to scrap the Bill. Link also published two reports on the [environmental costs](#) of the REUL Bill and the [economic costs](#) of the REUL Bill, the second of which was picked up by [several media outlets](#) and was noted by Ministers. Link will continue to campaign against the REUL Bill and add value to the movement by convening the environment sector's voice and messaging.

Cost of living crisis sector survey

Following on from our surveys in 2020 and 2021 on the financial and organisational impact of the pandemic on the environment sector, Link investigated the implications of another financial crisis swiftly off the back of COVID-19.

We surveyed 39 organisations across the four nations on the impact that the cost-of-living crisis was having. Our [Cost of Living Impact Report](#) revealed a picture of dramatically increased running, staffing and project costs, paired with reduced income across multiple streams, all of which were resulting in constrained capacity and reductions in project delivery for nature organisations. On average environment NGOs predicted an income reduction of 13% going into 2023, on top of already reduced income during the pandemic, significantly reducing overall financial resource. The research also highlighted increased staffing pressure throughout the sector, particularly as a result of low wages, alongside notable challenges in the grant-funding environment.

Link's new research built upon findings from the National Lottery Heritage Fund Pulse survey, and was used as a deep-dive into the issue. As with our pandemic surveys we received wide-ranging responses from the Defra group and funders about the worth of the research in helping to make decisions on the funding approach for the sector. Link's fleet of foot response and in-depth analysis gave the data to back-up calls for further support for struggling nature restoration programs in particular.

Putting wildlife, nature recovery, and access to nature at the heart of the planning system

Link's Land Use Planning Group has been highlighting the importance of and opportunities to embed nature recovery for wildlife and people. There have been several opportunities to do so this year as planning reform trundles on, including through Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill, the [reform of environmental assessment](#), reform of major infrastructure planning, and the [detail of the Biodiversity Net Gain](#) regulations.

The group developed and drafted [several amendments](#) for the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill, including ones which would strengthen Local Nature Recovery Strategies, create a new planning designation called Wildbelt for the recovery of nature, update the purposes and duties of National Parks and AONBs to strengthen them for nature recovery and to enable portions of them to be included in 30x30, and to introduce a [levelling up mission for access to a healthy natural environment](#). Working with and through the [Better Planning Coalition](#), Link has been able to share our environmental messages and boost the overall cross-sector message of the coalition that better planning is needed for nature, climate and people.

We will continue to build on this work in 2023, advocating for primary legislation, regulation and policy which supports nature-positive planning and access to nature for all.

Recovering nature for wildlife and people

The Link Nature and Wellbeing Strategy Group has been hard at work influencing nature policy and highlighting opportunities to embed nature into access, health and education policy.

Building on its work on 30x30 last year, the group produced a [progress report](#), finding that the Government has only reached 3.22% of land protected for nature in 2022. The Government needs to level up and expand the network of protected sites, as well as update and strengthen protected landscapes for nature recovery and people, so that portions of National Parks and AONBs can contribute to 30x30. Link laid out these positions in [a response to the Nature Recovery Green Paper](#) and [response to the Glover Landscapes Review consultation](#).

The group also seized several opportunities to advocate for a thriving natural environment everywhere to support people's health and wellbeing. We highlighted the opportunity for nature recovery and connecting young people with nature through education policy when [responding to the Department for Education's Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy](#). We also [submitted evidence](#) to the Department for Health and Social Care's mental health and wellbeing plan, making the case for more and better nature for all to improve mental health outcomes.

Towards a sustainable farming future

Our focus for 2022 spanned across both inside-track advocacy with Defra and political/parliamentary advocacy. With Defra, we continued to help them to develop their thinking on the schemes, including recommendations in our '[Priorities for the Sustainable Farming Incentive and Local Nature Recovery](#)' paper. Many of these recommendations were taken up in the 2023 schemes which were announced at the beginning of 2023, for example by introducing planning and training for Integrated Pest Management. We continue to advocate for closer alignment between the ELM schemes and the Government's environmental targets, however as yet there are still no set of objectives set within the programme.

In parliamentary advocacy we tried to influence the damaging narratives that emerged around food security in 2022 as a result of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. We have had relative success in ensuring that biodiversity and climate resilience are at the heart of food production, and must be protected and underpinned to shore up food security. We have engaged parliamentarians through [briefings](#), select committee [evidence](#) and meetings with MPs and peers.

Reducing the chemical pollution burden

In 2022, we began a project to highlight and tackle chemical pollution in England and the rest of the UK in the Government's upcoming Chemicals Strategy. While most of the public-facing work is scheduled for 2023, we made some headway with engaging organisations, parliamentarians and Defra in our agenda.

The key asks of our campaign are that the government: puts group restrictions on the worst chemicals, so that only the most essential uses are allowed; accounts for the 'cocktail effect' whereby chemicals interact within the environment (by introducing a Mixtures Assessment Factor); and that Government monitoring is vastly improved so that we can build up a more comprehensive picture of chemicals in air, waters and soils.

Ensuring clean healthy and thriving seas

The Marine Group has continued to maintain pressure on the Government to deliver its flagship Highly Protected Marine Areas, publishing a [paper on the criteria for success of the programme](#) and responding to [the consultation over the summer](#). The group has most recently [responded in the press](#) to the disappointing scaling back of the initial pilot sites from 5 sites to 3. The group is highly engaged in the Marine Management Organisation's programme to restrict damaging fishing activity in offshore MPAs, making the case that these restrictions should go further and be delivered faster.

The group drafted a [briefing for MPs](#) on the harm that new offshore oil and gas production will cause to the marine environment, particularly through oil spills and underwater noise. This led to an MP tabling written questions on the issue, and subsequent [press coverage](#) of the number of oil spills.

Protecting marine mammals

The group have been engaged with the EFRA Committee's ongoing inquiry into marine mammals, submitting [a written response](#) and with a number of members giving evidence in front of MPs. Since the initial hearings, the group have submitted further information on the harms of bycatch, providing evidence of the inadequacy of current monitoring and trials.

Link organised an event in July to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the moratorium on commercial whaling passed by the International Whaling Commission. This was held at the Brighton Metropole Hotel, where the original agreement was reached. A permanent memorial plaque was unveiled in the hotel lobby by James Smith, UK Commissioner to the IWC. In his speech, he reaffirmed the UK Government's commitment to the conservation and welfare of whales and the future of the IWC and announced a new UK contribution of £300,000 towards its conservation work and operating costs.

Providing a pollution solution

Link's Waste and Resources Group have continued to advocate for stronger and faster action to tackle polluting items, ensuring that ocean pollution is halted at source. The group responded to Government consultations on banning items such as single use plastic cutlery and plates, arguing for the most ambitious bans. They produced a [draft private members' bill](#) which would halt the consenting of new waste incinerator plants. The group also published its [plan for delivering the widespread adoption of reuse and refill systems](#), highlighting how these systems could dramatically reduce litter and cut resource use.

The group have sought to highlight how improved policies could deliver environmental benefits across the Government's agenda, responding to a consultation on improved food waste reporting by businesses, on reforming the landfill tax, and on the [policies needed to tackle illegal waste exports](#). Working with colleagues at Green Alliance, the group produced a briefing for MPs for a Westminster Hall debate on the environmental harm of disposable vapes. This has been expanded into a public facing briefing, bringing the sector together to highlight the emerging harm from these badly designed, and frequently littered items.

Securing a global goal for nature

After a long delay, December 2022 finally saw the Convention on Biological Diversity COP15 take place in Montreal. Across the two years leading up to the talks, Wildlife and Countryside Link had been working with colleagues in sister Links across the UK to develop recommendations on how the UK could demonstrate ambitious leadership to secure a strong global deal for nature at COP15.

In 2022 our focus was on raising awareness about COP15 amongst the Link membership, general public and across Westminster. We co-organised a Westminster event in early Summer to raise awareness of the CBD amongst parliamentarians and to promote the recommendations in our [ELUK COP15 report](#) and '10 species to save the world' report. We also attended regular stakeholder calls with the Defra CBD team, updates from which were fed back to members in regular information sessions to inform their own work around COP15.

The run up to COP15 also saw the launch of the 'Urgent Conversation' campaign, organised by RSPB with wide support across the Link membership. Link played an important role in sharing information about campaign plans and building support for the campaign amongst members.

Although we were pleased to see an ambitious agreement agreed at COP15 through the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, the key will be its implementation. In 2023 and beyond, our focus will be on ensuring the UK produces a clear and ambitious National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, which includes details about how delivery of the goals of the framework will be coordinated across all four UK nations.

Environmental markets in the UK

Following Link's initial discussions on carbon markets in 2021, 2022 saw a broadening of this work to look at environmental markets more generally. We undertook a project across 2022 to establish a series of principles for codes to guide projects selling credits through environmental markets, and set out the governance and market making requirements to ensure that markets are high integrity, work for local communities, and contribute to delivering national nature targets.

We carried out much of this work through the existing markets group, with support from the NGO Climate and Land Use group which became an official Link group in 2022. Alongside the development of a report which will be released in early 2023, we submitted responses to the CCC voluntary carbon markets consultation and the BEIS consultation on the development of the UK ETS. As part of our work on the latter, we secured a meeting with the ETS team in BEIS to discuss our concerns about the potential inclusion of nature-based greenhouse gas removals under the ETS. We will continue engagement on this topic in 2023.

In October 2022 we organised alongside RSPB an away day to RSPB Medmerry for members of Defra's Green Finance team and others working on environmental markets within Defra. We will continue to engage with the team going forwards, sharing the recommendations from our forthcoming report, including the suggestion to introduce a Nature Recovery Obligation across key sectors to drive investment in nature.

Structure, Governance and Management

Leadership

Link's Board of Trustees, and its Finance and Resources Sub Committee, each held four meetings during 2022.

In 2022, Philip Hewetson stepped down from his position as Treasurer on the Board. We would like to thank him for dedicated and exceptional service. Marcus Gilleard has served the maximum of three terms on the Board of Trustees and was re-elected for a further one year at Link's 2022 AGM. Sandy Luk has served her first term on the Board of Trustees and was re-elected for her second term at Link's 2022 AGM.

The organisation is a charitable company limited by guarantee, incorporated on 7 December 1999 and registered as a charity on 5 January 2005. Members of the Board of Trustees are Directors for the purpose of Company Law and Trustees for the purpose of Charity Law. Members who served during the year, and up to the date of this report, are set out on Page 3.

The company was established under a Memorandum of Association which established the objects and powers of the charitable company and is governed under its Articles of Association. In 2007 the Memorandum and Articles of Association were reviewed, both to ensure compliance with the Companies Act (2006) and Charities Act (2006). Recognising the need to update the Articles, a further review was carried out in 2017/18 and the updated Articles were agreed upon by members at a special General Meeting on 22 May 2020.

Under the Articles, the members of the Board of Trustees are elected by a postal vote in advance or by secret ballot at the Annual General Meeting. Members of the Board of Trustees must retire at the third Annual General Meeting after that at which he or she was first elected, and is eligible for re-election for up to a further term ending on the sixth Annual General Meeting after their first election. The Treasurer must retire at the Annual General Meeting every three years but may stand for re-election with no maximum term of office.

Risk Management

Wildlife and Countryside Link views the management of risk as an integral element of its governance processes. The major risks to which the charity is exposed, as identified by Link's Director and Trustees, are reviewed annually with systems in place to mitigate those risks. It is recognised that any control system can only provide reasonable, but not absolute, assurance that major risks have been managed adequately.

The two main risks and uncertainties that face the charity, as identified in the Risk Register, include risks to income and reputation. Link aims to mitigate these risks by scrutinising the finances through the Finance and Resources Sub-Committee, by diversifying our funding sources, horizon scanning with members, non-members and other stakeholders, and regularly communicating with our member organisations to ensure they are updated, engaged and benefitting from their membership of Link.

The Link team adheres to protocols and procedures, with the finances being closely monitored to ensure expenditure is appropriate and within reasonable limits, and that adequate resources are in place. Link's Communications Manager also works with our Director and Trustees to reduce potential risks to Link's reputation.

Wildlife and Countryside Link has a health and safety policy to provide adequate control of the health and safety risks arising from our work activities. Each new joiner is given an induction in the most up to date health & safety policy.

Diversity, equality and inclusion

Link is committed to being an inclusive workplace and to helping the environment sector become more diverse and representative. In Spring, 2022 Link had 11 staff including the CEO and a Board of 10 members.

- Six staff are female with a gender ratio of 54.5% female to 45.5% male, 66% male on SMT
- Of the 10 Board members 4 are female (40%) compared to 6 males (60%)
- No staff members are from ethnically diverse backgrounds
- One Board member is from an ethnically diverse background
- No staff members have reported disabilities or medical conditions

- No Board members have reported disabilities or medical conditions
- One staff member is in their 50s, one in the 40s, three in their 30s and six (54%) in their 20s
- Data on ages of Board members is not available
- Data on staff sexual orientation is unavailable
- We did not collect data on Board member sexual orientation

Pay Policy for senior staff

The Trustees consider that the Board of Trustees and the senior management team comprise the key management personnel of the charity in charge of directing and controlling, running and operating the Charity on a day-to-day basis. Day-to-day operational responsibility is delegated from Trustees to the CEO and senior team. All Trustees give of their time freely and no Trustee received remuneration in the year. Details of Trustees' expenses and related party transactions are disclosed in Note 6 to the accounts.

We have reviewed the pay and rewards given to staff to ensure we give fair terms in line with other similar organisations. One member of staff received a total emolument of £60-70,000.

Preparation of the report

This report has been prepared taking advantage of the small companies' exemption of section 415A of the Companies Act 2006.

Exemptions from Disclosure

There are no exemptions required.

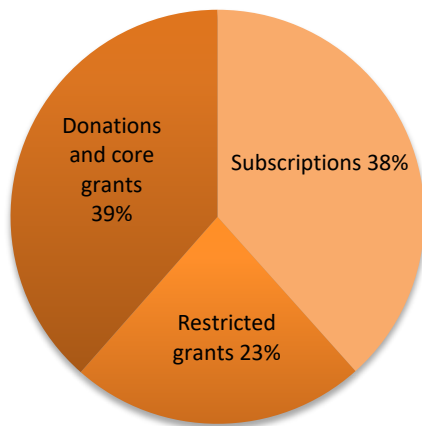
Funds held as custodian Trustee on behalf of others

Link does not have a custodian Trustee.

Financial Review

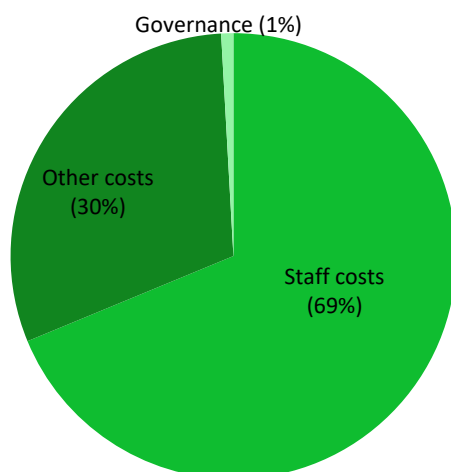
Here we summarise financial information to give an overview of the charity's financial performance during 2022, by using selected information from the full annual accounts. The full accounts are set out at page 17 and thereafter.

2022 Income



During 2022, a number of restricted grants contributed towards funding the ongoing implementation of Link's five year Strategy 2020-25. Link's total income in 2022 was £589,596 (2021 £675,485). Member subscriptions for the year totaled £225,880 (2021 £197,131).

2022 Expenditure



Link's total expenditure amounted to £542,179 (2021 £470,929).

Total expenditure on staff costs totaled £387,389. As in past years, this does not take account of the contribution made to Link's collaborative work by staff within our member organisations, who help us to achieve so much. These results show that Link has and continues to develop a secure financial model based on member subscriptions with a level of grants that allow Link to maximise its effectiveness for its members.

Reserves Policy

Link's Reserve policy is to maintain free reserves of six months operating expenditure, over a rolling period of three years. This allows Link's Board of Trustees to maximise the use of the financial reserves but demands a plan to achieve the policy. At 31 December 2022, free reserves (in the general fund) amounted to 9.85 months of total 2022 expenditure. This level of reserves will allow Link to continue to implement the current interim Strategy.

Grants

Link secured valuable grant funding in 2022 to support its work with members for the next several years. Link confirmed two three years fundings from The Helvellyn Foundation and from The Treebeard Trust for 2022 to 2025. This is in addition to the existing four years funding from the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation for 2022 to 2025 and three years funding from the John Ellerman Foundation for 2021 to 2023. This unrestricted core funding will help support the salary costs of the core team, including Link's CEO, Head of Advocacy, Communication manager, Policy officers and Admin and Finance officer. These unrestricted funds, in addition to other unrestricted core income from member subscriptions, are essential for Link's core policy work that helps the organisation deliver on its own objectives on areas such as wildlife crime, the freshwater environment, agriculture, and nature and wellbeing.

Link also secured restricted funds to support particular Policy officers and projects, including grants from the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation to support the Head of Communications, from the European Climate Foundation to support carbon offsetting work, from the Woodland Trust towards work on Local Nature Recovery, from the European Climate Foundation towards planning work, from Esme Fairbairn Foundation and the Savitri Trust towards work on chemical pollution.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all of those individuals and organisations that made 2022 such a great year for Link, including our members, partners, funders and colleagues. With their generous support, we will continue to work hard in 2023 and beyond to conserve and protect wildlife and the countryside.

Preparation of the report

This report has been prepared taking advantage of the small companies' exemption of section 415A of the Companies Act 2006. It was approved, and authorised for issue, by the Trustees on 22 May 2022 and signed on its behalf by:



Martin Spray CBE, Chair of Wildlife & Countryside Link

Members



Wildlife and
Countryside

LINK 



GREENPEACE



earthwatch
EUROPE



Council for
British Archaeology



ANGLING
TRUST



FISH
LEGAL

waterwise



**INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT TO THE TRUSTEES OF
WILDLIFE AND COUNTRYSIDE LINK**

Independent examiner's report to the trustees of Wildlife and Countryside Link ('the Company')

I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the accounts of the Company for the year ended 31st December 2022.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity's trustees of the Company (and also its directors for the purposes of company law) you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 ('the 2006 Act').

Having satisfied myself that the accounts of the Company are not required to be audited under Part 16 of the 2006 Act and are eligible for independent examination, I report in respect of my examination of your charity's accounts as carried out under Section 145 of the Charities Act 2011 ('the 2011 Act'). In carrying out my examination I have followed the Directions given by the Charity Commission under Section 145(5) (b) of the 2011 Act.

Independent examiner's statement

Since your charity's gross income exceeded £250,000 your examiner must be a member of a listed body. I can confirm that I am qualified to undertake the examination because I am a member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales, which is one of the listed bodies.

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the Company as required by Section 386 of the 2006 Act; or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records; or
3. the accounts do not comply with the accounting requirements of Section 396 of the 2006 Act other than any requirement that the accounts give a true and fair view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination; or
4. the accounts have not been prepared in accordance with the methods and principles of the Statement of Recommended Practice for accounting and reporting by charities (applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102)).

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



Richard Appleyard FCA
The Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales
Gibbons Mannington & Phipps LLP
Chartered Accountants
20 Eversley Road
Bexhill-on-Sea
East Sussex
TN40 1HE

Date: 15 June 2023

**STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2022**

	Notes	Unrestricted fund £	Restricted funds £	2022 Total funds £	2021 Total funds £
INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS FROM					
Donations and legacies	2	226,446	69	226,515	195,773
Charitable activities	4				
Charitable Activities		225,880	136,499	362,379	479,609
Investment income	3	<u>702</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>702</u>	<u>103</u>
Total		<u>453,028</u>	<u>136,568</u>	<u>589,596</u>	<u>675,485</u>
 EXPENDITURE ON					
Charitable activities	5				
Charitable Activities		<u>325,152</u>	<u>217,027</u>	<u>542,179</u>	<u>470,929</u>
 NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE)		127,876	(80,459)	47,417	204,556
 RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS					
Total funds brought forward		<u>434,659</u>	<u>147,661</u>	<u>582,320</u>	<u>377,764</u>
 TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD		<u>562,535</u>	<u>67,202</u>	<u>629,737</u>	<u>582,320</u>

CONTINUING OPERATIONS

All income and expenditure has arisen from continuing activities.

BALANCE SHEET
31ST DECEMBER 2022

	Notes	Unrestricted fund £	Restricted funds £	2022 Total funds £	2021 Total funds £
FIXED ASSETS					
Tangible assets	12	2,850	-	2,850	6,180
CURRENT ASSETS					
Debtors	13	24,097	-	24,097	11,415
Cash at bank and in hand		575,879	67,200	643,079	610,160
		599,976	67,200	667,176	621,575
CREDITORS					
Amounts falling due within one year	14	(40,289)	-	(40,289)	(45,435)
NET CURRENT ASSETS		559,687	67,200	626,887	576,140
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES		562,537	67,200	629,737	582,320
NET ASSETS		562,537	67,200	629,737	582,320
FUNDS	16				
Unrestricted funds				562,537	434,659
Restricted funds				67,200	147,661
TOTAL FUNDS				629,737	582,320

The charitable company is entitled to exemption from audit under Section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 for the year ended 31st December 2022.

The members have not required the company to obtain an audit of its financial statements for the year ended 31st December 2022 in accordance with Section 476 of the Companies Act 2006.

The trustees acknowledge their responsibilities for

- ensuring that the charitable company keeps accounting records that comply with Sections 386 and 387 of the Companies Act 2006 and
- preparing financial statements which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company as at the end of each financial year and of its surplus or deficit for each financial year in accordance with the requirements of Sections 394 and 395 and which otherwise comply with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 relating to financial statements, so far as applicable to the charitable company.

BALANCE SHEET - continued
31ST DECEMBER 2022

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to charitable companies subject to the small companies regime.

The financial statements were approved by the Board of Trustees and authorised for issue on 22 May 2023 and were signed on its behalf by:



M Spray - Trustee

**CASH FLOW STATEMENT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2022**

	Notes	2022 £	2021 £
Cash flows from operating activities			
Cash generated from operations	1	<u>32,217</u>	<u>209,851</u>
Net cash provided by operating activities		<u>32,217</u>	<u>209,851</u>
Cash flows from investing activities			
Interest received		<u>702</u>	<u>103</u>
Net cash provided by investing activities		<u>702</u>	<u>103</u>
Change in cash and cash equivalents in the reporting period		32,919	209,954
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the reporting period		<u>610,160</u>	<u>400,206</u>
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the reporting period		<u>643,079</u>	<u>610,160</u>

**NOTES TO THE CASH FLOW STATEMENT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2022**

1. RECONCILIATION OF NET INCOME TO NET CASH FLOW FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES

	2022	2021
	£	£
Net income for the reporting period (as per the Statement of Financial Activities)	47,417	204,556
Adjustments for:		
Depreciation charges	3,330	3,329
Interest received	(702)	(103)
(Increase)/decrease in debtors	(12,682)	30,288
Decrease in creditors	(5,146)	(28,219)
Net cash provided by operations	<u>32,217</u>	<u>209,851</u>

2. ANALYSIS OF CHANGES IN NET FUNDS

	At 1/1/22	Cash flow	At 31/12/22
	£	£	£
Net cash			
Cash at bank and in hand	<u>610,160</u>	<u>32,919</u>	<u>643,079</u>
	<u>610,160</u>	<u>32,919</u>	<u>643,079</u>
Total	<u>610,160</u>	<u>32,919</u>	<u>643,079</u>

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2022

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

Basis of preparing the financial statements

The financial statements of the charitable company, which is a public benefit entity under FRS 102, have been prepared in accordance with the Charities SORP (FRS 102) 'Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2019)', Financial Reporting Standard 102 'The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland' and the Companies Act 2006. The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention.

Income

All income is recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities once the Charity has entitlement to the funds, it is probable that the income will be received and the amount can be measured reliably.

Subscription income from full and associate member organisations is invoiced on a calendar year basis and is recognised accordingly.

Grants are recognised as income in the Statement of financial activities in accordance with the terms attached by the grantor.

Income from recharged costs is accrued when the associated costs are incurred. Other donations and sundry income are recognised in the Statement of financial activities when received.

Expenditure

Expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis and has been classified under headings that aggregate all cost related to the category. Where costs cannot be directly attributed to particular headings they have been allocated to activities on a basis consistent with the use of resources.

Governance costs are those incurred in connection with compliance with constitutional and statutory requirements.

Tangible fixed assets

Depreciation is provided at the following annual rates in order to write off each asset over its estimated useful life.

Plant and machinery	- 4 years
Fixtures and fittings	- 4 years
Computer equipment	- 4 years

All assets costing more than £1,000 are capitalised.

Taxation

The charity is exempt from corporation tax on its charitable activities.

Fund accounting

Unrestricted funds can be used in accordance with the charitable objectives at the discretion of the trustees.

Restricted funds can only be used for particular restricted purposes within the objects of the charity. Restrictions arise when specified by the donor or when funds are raised for particular restricted purposes.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2022

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES - continued

Fund accounting

Further explanation of the nature and purpose of each fund is included in the notes to the financial statements.

Pension costs and other post-retirement benefits

The charitable company operates a defined contribution pension scheme. Contributions payable to the charitable company's pension scheme are charged to the Statement of Financial Activities in the period to which they relate.

Operating leases

Rentals under operating leases are charged to the Statement of financial activities on a straight line basis over the lease term.

Cash at bank and in hand

Cash at bank and in hand includes cash and short term highly liquid investments with a short maturity of three months or less from the opening of the deposit.

Debtors

Debtors are recognised at their recoverable amounts to which the charity is entitled.

Creditors

Creditors are recognised where the charity has a present obligation resulting from a past event that will probably result in the transfer of funds to a third party and the amount due to settle the obligation can be measured or estimated reliably. Creditors are normally recognised at their settlement value.

2. DONATIONS AND LEGACIES

	2022	2021
	£	£
Donations	298	3,999
Grants for core funding	226,217	189,488
Government grant: Furlough Scheme	-	2,286
	<u>226,515</u>	<u>195,773</u>

3. INVESTMENT INCOME

	2022	2021
	£	£
Deposit account interest	<u>702</u>	<u>103</u>

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2022**

4. INCOME FROM CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

		2022	2021
	Activity	£	£
Subscriptions	Charitable Activities	225,880	197,131
Grants for project work	Charitable Activities	136,499	282,478
		<u>362,379</u>	<u>479,609</u>

5. CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES COSTS

	Direct Costs (see note 6)	Support costs (see note 7)	Totals
	£	£	£
Charitable Activities	<u>539,655</u>	<u>2,524</u>	<u>542,179</u>

6. DIRECT COSTS OF CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

	2022	2021
	£	£
Staff costs	387,389	327,218
Payroll management	896	708
Insurance	1,545	927
Rent, rates & electricity	30,334	29,201
Sundries	67	160
Publications, research and reports	30,050	22,355
Consultant fees	47,581	49,854
Subscriptions expense	14,498	4,223
Events	3,842	10,495
Communications	4,623	4,526
IT Technical Support	6,507	8,431
IT software and consumables	2,160	1,959
Travel and subsistence	3,240	1,305
Office maintenance & repairs	1,950	1,220
Staff training	1,643	1,874
Bad debts	-	100
Depreciation	<u>3,330</u>	<u>3,329</u>
	<u>539,655</u>	<u>467,885</u>

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2022**

7. SUPPORT COSTS

	Governance costs £
Charitable Activities	<u>2,524</u>

Support costs, included in the above, are as follows:

	2022 Charitable Activities £	2021 Total activities £
Preparation of statutory accounts	1,190	1,638
Accountancy fees	288	-
Independent examination	1,000	1,332
Legal and professional fees	26	13
Bank charges	<u>20</u>	<u>61</u>
	<u>2,524</u>	<u>3,044</u>

8. NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE)

Net income/(expenditure) is stated after charging/(crediting):

	2022 £	2021 £
Depreciation - owned assets	<u>3,330</u>	<u>3,329</u>

9. TRUSTEES' REMUNERATION AND BENEFITS

There were no trustees' remuneration or other benefits for the year ended 31st December 2022 nor for the year ended 31st December 2021.

Trustees' expenses

Expenses for travel and subsistence were reimbursed to one trustee and amounted to £319 (2021 £97).

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2022**

10. STAFF COSTS

	2022	2021
	£	£
Wages and salaries	339,744	289,012
Social security costs	30,193	24,246
Other pension costs	17,452	13,960
	<u>387,389</u>	<u>327,218</u>

The average monthly number of employees during the year was as follows:

	2022	2021
	11	10
Staff members	<u>11</u>	<u>10</u>

One employee received remuneration of between £60,000 and £70,000 in the year (exclusive of employer pensions and employer National Insurance contributions). (2021: 1 employee was paid between £60,000 and £70,000). The employer pension contributions for that member of staff amounted to £3,750 in the year.

The key management personnel of the Charity comprise all staff members. The total employee benefits of the key management personnel of the Charity were as disclosed above.

11. COMPARATIVES FOR THE STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

	Unrestricted fund £	Restricted funds £	Total funds £
INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS FROM			
Donations and legacies	191,872	3,901	195,773
Charitable activities			
Charitable Activities	197,131	282,478	479,609
Investment income	<u>103</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>103</u>
Total	<u>389,106</u>	<u>286,379</u>	<u>675,485</u>
EXPENDITURE ON			
Charitable activities			
Charitable Activities	<u>250,355</u>	<u>220,574</u>	<u>470,929</u>
NET INCOME	138,751	65,805	204,556
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS			
Total funds brought forward	<u>295,908</u>	<u>81,856</u>	<u>377,764</u>
TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD	<u>434,659</u>	<u>147,661</u>	<u>582,320</u>

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2022

12. TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

	Plant and machinery £	Fixtures and fittings £	Computer equipment £	Totals £
COST				
At 1st January 2022 and 31st December 2022	<u>5,159</u>	<u>6,000</u>	<u>2,160</u>	<u>13,319</u>
DEPRECIATION				
At 1st January 2022	3,479	2,697	963	7,139
Charge for year	<u>1,290</u>	<u>1,500</u>	<u>540</u>	<u>3,330</u>
At 31st December 2022	<u>4,769</u>	<u>4,197</u>	<u>1,503</u>	<u>10,469</u>
NET BOOK VALUE				
At 31st December 2022	<u>390</u>	<u>1,803</u>	<u>657</u>	<u>2,850</u>
At 31st December 2021	<u>1,680</u>	<u>3,303</u>	<u>1,197</u>	<u>6,180</u>

13. DEBTORS: AMOUNTS FALLING DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR

	2022 £	2021 £
Trade debtors	12,500	300
Other debtors	7,508	7,508
Prepayments	<u>4,089</u>	<u>3,607</u>
	<u>24,097</u>	<u>11,415</u>

14. CREDITORS: AMOUNTS FALLING DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR

	2022 £	2021 £
Trade creditors	17,062	2,523
Social security and other taxes	9,830	7,894
Pensions	2,185	1,826
Deferred income	-	1,000
Accrued expenses	<u>11,212</u>	<u>32,192</u>
	<u>40,289</u>	<u>45,435</u>

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2022**

15. LEASING AGREEMENTS

Minimum lease payments under non-cancellable operating leases fall due as follows:

	2022	2021
	£	£
Within one year	<u>14,893</u>	<u>7,447</u>

16. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS

	At 1/1/22 £	Net movement in funds £	At 31/12/22 £
Unrestricted funds			
General fund	434,659	127,878	562,537
Restricted funds			
Environment Links UK	1,631	-	1,631
Agriculture	1,079	-	1,079
Marine Projects	32,344	(32,344)	-
Blueprint for Water	846	-	846
Planning Coalition	289	-	289
Head of Communications	33,899	(21,011)	12,888
Wildlife Crime and Trade	-	18	18
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	27,103	(27,103)	-
European Climate Foundation	29,633	(29,633)	-
Green Recovery	20,687	(20,513)	174
Local Nature Recovery Strategies	-	125	125
Peer Support Network for People of Colour	150	-	150
Chemical Campaign	-	50,000	50,000
	<u>147,661</u>	<u>(80,461)</u>	<u>67,200</u>
TOTAL FUNDS	<u>582,320</u>	<u>47,417</u>	<u>629,737</u>

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2022

16. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS - continued

Net movement in funds, included in the above are as follows:

	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	Movement in funds £
Unrestricted funds			
General fund	453,028	(325,150)	127,878
Restricted funds			
Marine Projects	-	(32,344)	(32,344)
Head of Communications	21,001	(42,012)	(21,011)
Wildlife Crime and Trade	68	(50)	18
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	-	(27,103)	(27,103)
European Climate Foundation	38,206	(67,839)	(29,633)
Green Recovery	-	(20,513)	(20,513)
Local Nature Recovery Strategies	7,293	(7,168)	125
Chemical Campaign	<u>70,000</u>	<u>(20,000)</u>	<u>50,000</u>
	<u>136,568</u>	<u>(217,029)</u>	<u>(80,461)</u>
TOTAL FUNDS	<u>589,596</u>	<u>(542,179)</u>	<u>47,417</u>

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2022

16. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS - continued

Comparatives for movement in funds

	At 1/1/21 £	Net movement in funds £	At 31/12/21 £
Unrestricted funds			
General fund	295,908	138,751	434,659
Restricted funds			
Environment Links UK	3,225	(1,594)	1,631
Agriculture	1,179	(100)	1,079
Marine Projects	22,832	9,512	32,344
Blueprint for Water	-	846	846
Planning Coalition	289	-	289
Head of Communications	31,032	2,867	33,899
Wildlife Crime and Trade	400	(400)	-
Convention on Biological Diversity	8,199	(8,199)	-
Environmental Funders Network	14,700	(14,700)	-
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	-	27,103	27,103
European Climate Foundation	-	29,633	29,633
Green Recovery	-	20,687	20,687
Peer Support Network for People of Colour	-	150	150
	<u>81,856</u>	<u>65,805</u>	<u>147,661</u>
TOTAL FUNDS	<u>377,764</u>	<u>204,556</u>	<u>582,320</u>

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2022**

16. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS - continued

Comparative net movement in funds, included in the above are as follows:

	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	Movement in funds £
Unrestricted funds			
General fund	389,106	(250,355)	138,751
Restricted funds			
Environment Links UK	-	(1,594)	(1,594)
Agriculture	-	(100)	(100)
Marine Projects	38,000	(28,488)	9,512
Blueprint for Water	3,750	(2,904)	846
Head of Communications	21,000	(18,133)	2,867
Wildlife Crime and Trade	-	(400)	(400)
Convention on Biological Diversity	1	(8,200)	(8,199)
Environmental Funders Network	-	(14,700)	(14,700)
DWP Kickstart Scheme	6,065	(6,065)	-
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	74,999	(47,896)	27,103
European Climate Foundation	41,206	(11,573)	29,633
Green Recovery	55,000	(34,313)	20,687
Local Nature Recovery Strategies	20,208	(20,208)	-
Peer Support Network for People of Colour	150	-	150
State of Nature campaign	26,000	(26,000)	-
	<u>286,379</u>	<u>(220,574)</u>	<u>65,805</u>
TOTAL FUNDS	<u>675,485</u>	<u>(470,929)</u>	<u>204,556</u>

Purposes of material restricted funds:

Marine Projects

The final instalments of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation's generous support for the role of Marine Policy Manager have been received. The Marine Policy Manager funding has been spent on a Link policy officer role, convening the work of the Marine Policy working group.

Head of Communications

The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation provided funding for Link's Head of Communications role, particularly to support Link's work in sharing marine conservation policy and messages. The majority of the funding has been spent and the remainder will be spent in the next financial year to continue to develop Link's strategic communications.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Final payment has been made to the consultancy Full Colour Ltd for our work together to understand and improve ethnic diversity in the environment sector. The funding was kindly provided by the John Ellerman Foundation, Natural England, the Joseph Rowntree Trust, and the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation.

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2022**

16. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS - continued

European Climate Foundation - climate, NBS

The Foundation supported work on nature-based solutions and environmental markets, leading to proposals for principles for high-integrity environmental markets, engagement with DEFRA and HMT, and new ideas for new regulations to require private sector investment in nature's recovery. The funds were spent on a Link policy officer role.

Green Recovery

This project with Green Alliance focused on ensuring that economic policy responses to the pandemic focused on environmental improvement, for example by showing that the remit of the UK Infrastructure Bank could be expanded to cover natural capital. Funding supported a Link policy officer role.

Chemical Campaign

The Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and the Savitri Trust provided essential core support for a new chemicals campaign, intended to strengthen the regulation of toxic chemicals in the UK. The campaign particularly focuses on river pollution. Most of the funding has been spent commissioning the Rivers Trust to undertake mapping and analysis of contaminants including pesticides, pharmaceuticals and "forever chemicals", using Environment Agency data. Additional funds have been spent to produce a shared parliamentary briefings and consultation responses, and to host an event on chemicals with UK Youth For Nature, advocating better monitoring and management of chemical pollution.

17. RELATED PARTY DISCLOSURES

Other than as disclosed in note 9 to the accounts, there were no related party transactions for the year ended 31st December 2022.

18. GUARANTEE BY MEMBERS OF THE COMPANY

Every member of the Company agrees to contribute to the Company £1 or any smaller amount if required if:-

- (a) The Company is wound-up while he or she is a member or within a year afterwards; and
- (b) The Company has debts and liabilities which it cannot meet out of its assets.

Accounts

Wildlife and
Countryside



Wildlife and Countryside Link

(A company limited by guarantee)

Company number: 03889519

Annual Report 2021

The Trustees submit their report together with the financial statements of Wildlife and Countryside Link for the year ended 31 December 2021.

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A Message from Link's Chair

2021 was a very successful year for Wildlife and Countryside Link.

Thanks to dedicated policy, advocacy and campaigning by Link and its members, including over 200,000 members of the public, the Government agreed to Link's campaign for a legally-binding target to halt the decline of wildlife by 2030. We are very proud of this legal change and grateful to everyone who supported the campaign. Now we must make sure it is delivered.

Link was also instrumental in securing important new funding for the environment movement in a time of financial turmoil. Our Green Recovery campaign and proposals for shovel-ready environmental projects gave rise to the £80million Green Recovery Challenge Fund. It is extremely satisfying to see the results of that work begin to appear on the ground.

There were other law and policy successes too, many of which you can find listed in this report: strengthening the legal recognition of animal sentience; helping to avert dangerous new planning proposals; broadening rules on biodiversity net gain; playing our part in the sewage campaign; and ensuring that the scope of new waste reduction commitments extends to all single-use items.

Despite these successes, there remains a huge challenge for environmental law and policy in England. Environmental laws are being weakened, funding is being squeezed, and environmental pressures continue to intensify. Many of the promises that we have secured from Government still need further detail and firmer delivery plans before they begin to make a difference for nature and wildlife.

In 2022, we will make the case not just to defend environmental law and spending, but to redouble Government efforts to tackle the climate and ecological emergencies. We are grateful to all of our members and to all those who support our work more broadly—partners, funders, politicians, members of the public. We look forward to working with you in 2022.

Martin Spray CBE DSc, Chair, Wildlife and Countryside Link

Richard Benwell, CEO, Wildlife and Countryside Link

Reference and Administrative Details

Link Trustees

Martin Spray, Chair	(appointed December 2018)
Philip Hewetson, Treasurer	(appointed December 2020)
Dominic Dyer	(appointed December 2018)
Marcus Gilleard	(appointed March 2015)
Sandy Luk	(appointed December 2018)
Simon Marsh	(appointed December 2018)
Nicola Hutchinson	(resigned December 2021)
Nadia Shaikh	(appointed December 2021)
Sarah McMonagle	(appointed December 2021)
Allison Ogden-Newton	(appointed December 2021)
Jason Reeves	(appointed December 2021)

Company Registered Number

03889519

Charity Registered Number

1107460

Principal Office Address

N101C Vox Studios, 1-45 Durham Street
London
SE11 5JH

Company Secretary and CEO

Dr Richard Benwell

Independent Examiner

John Speed
JS2 Limited
One Crown Square
Woking
Surrey
GU21 6HR

Bankers

The Co-operative Bank
PO Box 101
1 Balloon Street
Manchester
M60 4EP

Nationwide
5-11 St George's Street
Douglas
Isle of Man
IM99 1RN

Solicitors

Russell-Cooke Solicitors
2 Putney Hill
London
SW15 6A

Trustees' Report

Objectives and Activities

The charitable objects of Wildlife and Countryside Link are to promote the conservation and protection of wildlife and countryside for the benefit of the public.

Our objectives and strategy

Wildlife and Countryside Link is the largest environment and wildlife coalition in England. We bring together our 65 organisations to develop and advocate proposals for improvements in law and policy for the benefit of wildlife and our environment. Our members campaign to conserve, enhance and access our landscapes, habitats, rivers and seas and protect our animals and plants. Together we have the support of over eight million people in the UK and directly protect over 750,000 hectares of land and 800 miles of coastline.

We review our aims, objectives and activities each year. This review looks at what we achieved and the outcomes of our work in the previous twelve months. The review also helps us ensure our aim, objectives and activities remained focused on our stated purposes. We have referred to the guidance contained in the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit when reviewing our aim and objectives and in planning our future activities. In particular, the Trustees consider how planned activities will contribute to the aims and objectives they have set.

In 2021, we agreed a new ten year strategy:

- We aim to be a **policy powerhouse** for the sector: keeping a broad overview, but targeting a small number of strategic areas where we can generate new, detailed and ambitious policy proposals that will influence policymakers. Our policy groups will forge progressive consensus: aiming for strong, common positions that complement individual members' work.
- We aim to be an **amplifier for our individual voices**: highlighting great work in our membership and lending focus and coherence to our common messages in the press and in political advocacy. Our communications will reflect and reinforce members' communications: creating opportunities for members large and small, as well as providing a collective identity in the media and in Westminster.
- We aim to be a **strategic hub and institutional touchpoint**: providing leadership in agreeing cross-sector strategic direction, supporting our members in Westminster, and acting as a nodal point for working with other groups. Our secretariat will lead and serve: adding value to members' interactions by identifying strategic opportunities, creating alliances and providing professional policy insight.

Our working groups remain the stalwarts of our policy work, providing a backbone of policy thinking for the sector. They ensure that important consultations and policy agendas are properly addressed by the sector, whether large and high profile, or concise and technical. Working together, we want to ensure that every organisation can lend its expertise to add to our joint voice, even where they would not be able to do so individually. In this way, our core activities are tightly focused on delivering public benefit by generating innovative and compelling shared policy positions that can influence law and policy for the improvement of the natural environment.

At the same time, we are working through more targeted project groups, developing rapid thinking in response to policy threats and opportunities, then disbanding or reforming to move on to the next. In this work, our network of policy thinkers has shown huge flexibility and alacrity, allowing us to respond quickly to agendas like planning reform and targets development, with recognised influence in government. We are grateful to everyone who has contributed and look forward to more successful projects together next year.

Alongside our policy work, we aim to support members in their corporate governance and institutional development. During the pandemic, we have been a hub for understanding and expressing the practical and financial challenges faced by the sector.

Trustees' Report (continued)

Challenges and future plans

Following the passage of the Agriculture Act, the Environment Act, and the Fisheries Act, an intense period of implementation and delivery is required to secure promised environmental benefits.

There remain main practical and policy challenges to the successful roll-out of the legislation. Details that were not included in the legislation itself are, nevertheless, instrumental in ensuring its efficacy. For example, the design of Environmental Land Management schemes; monitoring and enforcement related to biodiversity net gain; the processes of agreeing and implementing local nature recovery strategies; the scope and ambition of Deposit Return and Extended Producer Responsibility; the designation of Highly Protected Marine Areas; and the details of the Fisheries Policy Statements; the details of Environment Act targets; and action to meet water quality goals all require much further detail.

In this context, one of the main challenges we face is capacity to contribute to such a great deal of technical work, aiming to lead thinking rather than simply respond to Government proposals. We aim to be agenda-setting. We have begun policy development in each of these areas, gathering views from members and partners.

At the same time, there come new political challenges. The cost of living crisis has already provoked some backlash against environmental thinking, most notably in the net zero arena. We will redouble our efforts to articulate and evidence the economic and social equity case for environmental action, including costs for future generations. We hope to make our work on equitable access to nature this year a good example of how environmental investment can benefit both biodiversity and people.

A second looming political challenge is renewed interest in deregulation and distancing from EU-derived law. This is manifest in questions about the future of the Habitats Regulations and in legislative proposals affecting access to environmental justice. We will be robust in defence of the Habitats Regulations and propositional about where a Nature Recovery Network can be strengthened, with added protection for sites and species.

A structural challenge for the environmental movement as a whole, including Link and its members, is to become more inclusive and representative. We are determined to change both because it is the right thing to do and because a more diverse and inclusive movement will be stronger and more resilient.

Public Benefit requirement

The Trustees of Wildlife and Countryside Link confirm that the organisation has Charitable Purposes pursuant to the Charities Act 2011. The Trustees believe that there are clear and identifiable public benefits arising from the pursuit of Wildlife and Countryside Link's aims and objectives, in terms of an enhanced natural environment, more abundant wildlife, and the health wellbeing and economic benefits they bring, and that these benefits are freely available to the public without restriction.

AGM

Link's Annual General Meeting took place on 6 December 2021 at Church House, Westminster. Alongside the formal AGM, we held a public conference. Keynote speakers included:

- Rt Hon George Eustice MP, Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, to speak about the Environment Act 2021.
- Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, to speak about planning reform.
- Marian Spain (CEO, Natural England) and Tony Juniper (Chair, Natural England) to speak about nature's recovery.

We used the platform of the conference to advocate for stronger environmental planning laws, increased access to nature, and improved environmental funding for farmers.

Trustees' Report (continued)

Achievements and Performance

In 2021, Link was at the forefront of political debate, working closely with other coalitions to guard against the risks of political change and to create new opportunities for improvement.

In 2021, Link managed and provided support for 13 groups on the following policy areas:

- Agriculture: Chair, Christopher Price (Rare Breeds Survival Trust); Vice Chair, Alice Groom (RSPB)
- Animal Welfare: Chair, Claire Bass (Humane Society International-UK)
- Blueprint for Water: Chair, Ali Morse (The Wildlife Trusts); Vice Chair, Jazz Austin (RSPB)
- Bovine TB: no Chair
- Invasive Non-Native Species: Chair, Emily Smith (Angling Trust)
- Land Use Planning: Chair, Rebecca Pullinger (Woodland Trust); Vice Chair, Carl Bunnage (RSPB)
- Legal Strategy: Chair, Carol Day (RSPB); Vice Chair, Rosie Sutherland (RSPB)
- Local Nature Recovery Strategies: Chair, Bruce Winney (WCL)
- Marine: Chair, Sean Clement (WWF), Vice Chair, Jacques Villemot (RSPB)
- Marine Mammals: Chair, Lucy Babey (ORCA)
- Nature and Wellbeing Strategy Group: Co Chair, Sue Young (TWT), Co Chair, Dom Higgins (TWT)
- Resources & Waste: Chair, Paula Chin (WWF-UK), Vice Chair, Pine Eisfeld-Pierantonio (WDC)
- Wildlife Crime & Trade: Chair, Martin Sims (LACS); Vice Chair, Craig Fellows (Badger Trust)

Link also took on new workstreams in 2021, including on green recovery, chemicals, and COP15. Key achievements in 2021 include:

Leading and winning a joint sector campaign to improve the State of Nature

Link's sector-leading State of Nature campaign launched in February 2021, aiming to secure a legal target to end nature's decline by 2030, in amendments to the Environment Bill. This had the support of 70 organisations, more than 30 celebrities including Steve Backshall, Chris Packham, and Stanley Johnson, and politicians from across the political spectrum. The campaign launched to high profile media fanfare in March 2021.

Coverage included: a Daily Telegraph [comment piece from Stanley Johnson](#), [Daily Express spread](#) with [comment piece from Craig Bennett](#), [Independent article](#), with [comment piece from Steve Backshall](#), [i news article](#), and [Times article](#). Three months of concerted campaigning achieved a [landmark Government promise for nature](#) in May 2021 when the Secretary of State confirmed a 'Net zero equivalent for nature' target would be included in the Environment Bill. However, this commitment was subsequently watered down with the target only needing to 'contribute to' halting species decline by 2030. Further heavy lobbying by Link's State of Nature coalition, supported by 208,000 petition signatures, succeeded in getting the change to legislation we needed for nature. Amended wording to 'deliver' a 2030 target to halt species decline was included in the Act.

This is widely regarded as the top achievement for the sector on the Environment Act, alongside influence on sewage pollution issues. Our campaign has meant that England is the first country in the world with a legally binding target to end nature's decline. Not only does this guarantee domestic action, it also puts the UK as a whole in a stronger negotiating position going into discussions of a global deal for nature at the COP15 biodiversity talks in 2022.

Providing sector insights and support through COVID-19 impact survey and Green Recovery funding

Throughout the pandemic Link conducted vital research into the financial and organisational impact of the COVID-crisis on the nature sector. Two initial pieces of research on the worrying financial position of the sector (with a quarter of eNGOS at high risk of becoming financially unviable or with less than four months of reserves) and on "shovel-ready" projects needing to be funded, were used to lobby Defra and Downing Street in Spring 2021. We received feedback that our research was central to securing [£80 million of funding for nature recovery](#), and public engagement projects, through the Defra/National Lottery Heritage Fund 'Green Recovery Challenge Fund'.

Trustees' Report (continued)

Further to this research, Link conducted two follow-up surveys, with an [in-depth report](#) published in summer 2021 on the state of the sector in the wake of the pandemic. This was shared widely with funders and feedback was received that this was invaluable in giving a sector-wide perspective and in helping several trusts to make decisions about their funding approach for the year ahead.

Towards a sustainable farming future

The early evolution of Defra's future farming plans has not been rooted in the Government's overall environmental objectives. Our focus last year was to encourage Defra to publish objectives for the Environmental Land Management scheme which demonstrate how the schemes will recover nature and reduce emissions, meeting Government targets such as net zero. Our report '[Digging Deeper](#)' put forward proposals for what such objectives could look like. In early 2022, the Government has published some [overarching objectives](#) for the scheme which is a notable positive impact.

At the end of 2021, Defra published its first [standards](#) for the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) due to be rolled out in 2022. By working closely with Defra, Link and its members managed to increase the ambition of the SFI to ensure that it was not paying for actions that farmers are already obliged to do under cross compliance or law. However, the SFI is currently still low in ambition. This year, Link will set out what a high ambition standard for the SFI look like, particularly for water quality and farmland biodiversity.

Finally, concerns remain about poor enforcement of farming rules, and the loss of some good practice measures in cross compliance from 2024. In 2022, Link will draw up proposals for improving farming regulation and enforcement over the Agricultural Transition.

Delivering a post-Brexit framework for high animal welfare standards

2021 was a busy year for animal welfare, with the Government publishing its [Animal Welfare Action Plan](#) in May. The Animal Welfare Strategy Group has been working to ensure that these welcome commitments are effectively delivered, starting with the cornerstone Animal Welfare (Sentience) Bill which delivers the post-Brexit recognition of animal sentience Link has been calling for some years.

The group has worked closely with the Defra Bill team and the Labour frontbench team to secure the Bill, which came under attack from some interest groups shortly after its introduction to the House of Lords in summer 2021. Through engagement with Defra, No10, Conservative MPs and the Labour front bench the group shored up support for the Bill, which successfully passed through the Lords to the Commons in December, managing also to secure a key enhancement for the Bill in the form of the [addition](#) of cephalopods (including octopuses) and decapod crustaceans (including crabs and lobsters) to the Bill scope.

The group is pressing the Government to swiftly deliver other elements of the Animal Welfare Action Plan to a high ambition specification, including a full ban on the breeding and sale of primates as pets (through amendment to the [Kept Animals Bill](#)), a ban on the [fur trade](#) and a ban on the use of [lead ammunition](#). Link secured discussion of the latter issue in the closing stages of the Environment Act and has drafted a Private Members Bill calling for a ban, which has now been introduced to the Lords.

A new Vision for our freshwater environment

The main focus for Blueprint for Water in 2021 was the launch of our report '[Actions to Recover England's Waters and Wildlife](#)'. This comprehensive report sets out our 'vision' for the freshwater environment and our 'how to' strategy for bringing our freshwaters back to health before it is too late, with recommendations under three key themes - Recover Biodiversity, Drive Down Pollution, and Re-think Our Relationship With Water. Our September [launch event](#) was attended by over 100 people, including water industry, Defra, Environment Agency, MPs, Lords, and water campaigners, and was covered in national press. Environment Agency colleagues were particularly receptive to the report, flagging that it was timely and has significantly helped to make the political case for freshwater.

Trustees' Report (continued)

Alongside the vision report, Blueprint also launched an '[Environmental Manifesto for PR24](#)', setting out what Government, regulators and water companies must do if PR24 is to deliver a step-change for people and nature. Blueprint engaged extensively with the water industry throughout 2021, responding to a multitude of consultations covering the [price review](#), [abstraction](#), the [WINEP](#) and the [WISER](#). Blueprint have also been heavily involved in the Regional Water Resources Groups, developing our '[Top 10 Asks](#)' for the draft plans and delivering a [webinar series](#) to encourage greater eNGO engagement in this process. We will continue to build on our work on PR24 and the Regional Plans throughout 2022. Blueprint will also continue to advocate for the asks presented in our Vision report, identifying key opportunities such as targets under the Environment Act, and the EA and Ofwat investigation into illegal sewage pollution.

A strong joint voice for badgers

After a long hiatus, 2021 saw Link's Bovine TB Working Group come together to develop strong joint responses to Government consultations on bTB [policy](#), and cattle [measures](#). We set out our opposition to the badger cull policy, highlighting that the huge costs of the policy, in terms of animal welfare, biodiversity and finance, have not been matched by evidence of its efficacy in controlling disease. Government have been increasingly active on the issue of bTB, and the Link group has provided a forum for eNGOs to discuss and build consensus. The group have also established connections with the campaign and advocacy coalition Badger Cull Campaigners, and have successfully re-established lines of communication with Defra. The group will continue to build on this engagement in 2022, having secured an invitation to sit on Defra's bTB Partnership.

Safeguarding the UK from invasive species

Following the release last year of the '[Prevention is Better Than Cure](#)' report, the Link INNS Group has continued to build on this work raising awareness of the need and advocating for increased funding and resources for tackling invasive species. Since securing a 1-year scoping trial of the INNS inspectorate, we again pushed for this inspectorate to be extended permanently through the 2021 Spending Review. We also raised the issue through collaboration with the [ELUK response](#) to the marine strategy, and through our submission to [Defra](#) on what a successful plant biosecurity strategy for Great Britain should look like.

We will continue to build on this work in 2022, using the 1-year scoping inspectorate trial to again make the case for a fully-funded, permanent INNS inspectorate. The Link INNS Group also took part in Invasive Species Week 2021 through a series of blogs to raise awareness of this often neglected threat to biodiversity, and the actions needed from various stakeholders.

Planning for people and wildlife

Link's Land Use Planning Group has been busy [highlighting](#) the importance of planning in creating greener and healthier places for people and wildlife. After strong cross-sector resistance to the Government's original planning reforms as set out in 2020, Michael Gove took over the planning portfolio as the new Secretary of State for the renamed Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

With a joint letter to Mr Gove and [briefing](#) on our positive proposals to improve the planning system for nature, climate and people, the new SoS accepted an invitation to speak at the 2021 Link Conference and AGM, where he gave reassurances as to the importance of nature in levelling up and planning.

The group will continue to advocate for nature-positive planning and access to nature for all in forthcoming levelling up and planning legislation. Also, with the successful Link Environment Bill amendment to [extend Biodiversity Net Gain](#) to Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects and the Royal Assent of the Environment Act, the group continued to engage with civil servants on the regulations and implementation of Biodiversity Net Gain in different contexts to ensure it delivers genuine gains for nature.

Trustees' Report (continued)

Safeguarding legal mechanisms to protect nature

Link's Legal Strategy Group has been working hard to reduce the harmful impact of attempted Government changes to judicial review (JR), which will restrict the ability of campaigners (including environmental campaigners) to secure effective remedies through JR. Pressure from the group played its part in the Government decision not to include some of its initial proposals in the Judicial Review & Courts Bill, published in July 2021. The group has been working with the Labour frontbench in the House of Commons to remove the remaining harmful proposals from clause 1 of the Bill, securing tabled [amendments](#) to remove clause 1 at committee and report stage of the Bill. The group will work with peers to press these amendments as the Bill passes through the House of Lords in 2022.

The group continues to highlight the UK's failure to comply with the Aarhus Convention on access to environmental justice, and made [representations](#) setting out this failure at the meeting of parties to the Aarhus Convention in October 2021. The group are now working on a blueprint Environmental Rights Act, to show the UK could comply with the Convention and ensure equitable access to environmental justice for all citizens.

Ensuring clean healthy and thriving seas

Link's Marine Group has had a busy year. Together with Environment Links UK (ELUK) the group [responded](#) to the consultation on the Marine Strategy (Part 3), programme of measures.

The Marine Group has continued its 'Ocean Recovery' campaign, launching a [scorecard](#) setting out the policies the group hoped to see delivered in 2021, a year ministers had dubbed a 'super year' for the oceans. This led to a [report](#) this January setting out progress over 2021, finding that many actions remained outstanding and calling on the Government to deliver these as the basis of a marine recovery agenda for 2022. The group have met with Oceans Minister Rebecca Pow and the Labour Shadow Secretary of State to discuss the campaign as well as with senior Defra officials.

The group has also produced a [report on 30x30 in the marine environment](#), aligning the sector on a shared 2030 vision for protecting our seas.

Protecting marine mammals

A Link [paper](#) on the need for Government support for the International Whaling Commission's (IWC) secretariat's office costs was well received by Defra and we understand that a bid was put in to the Comprehensive Spending Review from Defra for additional IWC funding as well as a commitment to circa £250k from departmental underspends. Officials have said that Link's paper and subsequent engagement was crucial in helping them effectively make the case for this spending.

Link helped organise an event in December to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the IWC, with senior officials speaking on behalf of Ministers and celebrity speakers. The Marine Mammals group have also pressured the Government to take strong stances on abuses in other countries, having written to Lord Goldsmith last summer about the dolphin killings on the Faroe Islands and whale experiments in Norway.

Recovering nature for wildlife and people

The Link Nature and Wellbeing Strategy Group, a new Link group evolved from the 25 Year Plan Working Group, set out [its position](#) on the importance of nature to people, and the importance of people to nature, in a statement at the beginning of the year.

The group developed proposals and launched a [report](#) on how the Government should deliver its promise to protect 30% of land by 2030 – securing an acknowledgement in a later Government publication that the entirety of National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty should not count towards the 30% target. The group identified other opportunities across other policy areas that could contribute to improving the state of nature and people's access and enjoyment of thriving nature, including with a [briefing](#) on ELM and 30x30 and starting to develop policy proposals for improving access to nature for all in planning legislation.

Trustees' Report (continued)

Providing a pollution solution

Link's Waste and Resources Group have responded to a suite of waste reform consultations this year, ensuring that ocean pollution is halted at source. The group has published parliamentary briefings to highlight limited Government ambition (examples [here](#) and [here](#), with the group [praised for their work in Parliament](#)) and submitted a series of hard-hitting consultation responses (examples [here](#) and [here](#)) on the same theme, [securing press coverage](#) for warnings on a lack of strong ambition for the proposed Deposit Return Scheme.

The Waste and Resources group published a [briefing](#) for Parliamentarians on the importance of tackling all single use items which can pollute the natural environment, in addition to just single use plastics. The original Environment Bill proposed a power only for charges on single use plastic items. This was in response to fears that, without tackling single use consumption in the round, plastic waste would simply be replaced by other materials waste which will also damage the environment, rather than consumption shifting to more sustainable, reusable, alternatives. Working with colleagues at Green Alliance, this was the group's priority amendment for the Environment Bill and we were delighted to see it pass the Lords and subsequently be accepted by the Government.

Tackling wildlife crime

The group published their fifth Annual Wildlife Crime [Report](#) (with 2020 figures) in November 2021, with Shadow Secretary of State for Defra Luke Pollard speaking at the launch event. The Report secured extensive [press coverage](#) and presented new evidence to support the group's key ask of making a shortlist of wildlife crimes (agreed with the National Wildlife Crime Unit in February 2021) notifiable.

As well as seeking change from Westminster, the group has been working to improve the prevention and prosecution of wildlife criminals on the ground, running an [engagement campaign](#) with Police and Crime Commissioners in Spring & Summer 2021 to make the case for more resourcing for wildlife crime teams, and securing new wildlife crime training for members of the Crown Prosecution Service, delivered by members of the group. Increased funding for the National Wildlife Crime Unit has also been secured.

The group has also been working to secure swift and [comprehensive implementation](#) of the Ivory Act, and for more action to [tackle hare coursing](#) – the Government announced new [measures](#) to address the latter in January 2022, including Link recommendations.

Tackling hazardous chemicals

The Government's much awaited UK Chemicals Strategy was delayed continually in 2021. Link spent the year developing proposals for the Strategy, including feeding into NGOs' '12 Key Asks for the UK Chemicals Strategy'.

In 2021 Link has established a forum for the sector to break down silos of industrial, agricultural and pharmaceutical chemicals. We aim to present new proposals on chemicals management in 2022.

Equality, diversity and inclusion

Link has two groups dedicated to improving equality, diversity and inclusivity among our membership and the wider movement: our EDI working group and our Peer Support Network for people of colour.

The main business of the EDI group this year has been to initiate a "State of the Sector" report on ethnic diversity in the environment movement, which aims to produce a roadmap for change alongside an analysis of the current situation. The quantitative and qualitative research element has been completed, with over 2,000 responses to our survey. The roadmap work is now in development. This work is a first attempt to plot a progressive course for the whole movement; it will only be a beginning, but we hope it will provide a framework for change and accountability.

The Peer Support Network follows a safe space "listening circle" model. It is intended to facilitate mutual support and learning for people of colour across the sector, especially for smaller organisations where there may not be an existing group and where diversity may be limited. The Network has made a positive and beneficial start and we are grateful to those who have given time to support the initiative.

Trustees' Report (continued)

A green (and blue) recovery

In 2021 Link put together its [proposal](#) for the Comprehensive Spending Review, including a minimum ask for £1.2bn for nature. This work highlighted a spending gap of over £4.5bn per annum for nature. In the Spending Review, the Government revealed that it would provide more than £250m for nature, but which includes some delivery of Environment Act commitments. It also increased the Nature for Climate Fund budget.

Link worked on the development of a [report](#) on levelling up through nature jobs in the UK, which Green Alliance spearheaded. This was followed by parliamentary advocacy, leading many MPs to see the potential for nature jobs in their constituencies.

Link helped to convene a coalition of finance NGOs and nature NGOs to work on creating a role for the Government's new UK Infrastructure Bank (UKIB) to invest in nature-based solutions (NbS). Work included writing to UKIB officials to call for this. In 2022, Link will continue to call for this, and will ensure that our members have a role in shaping UKIB policy on NbS.

Securing a global goal for nature

The four UK Environment Link organisations have continued to work together to set out what the four UK Governments need to deliver ahead of the delayed Convention on Biological Diversity COP15 in Kunming, China, now scheduled to go ahead later this year.

In 2021 the ELUK group produced our '*Achieving harmony with nature*' report, which recommends how the four Governments of the UK can develop a strong negotiating position capable of influencing the success of the post-2020 biodiversity framework. We have called for legally-binding targets for the recovery of species and habitats by 2030, proper delivery of the UK's 30x30 target, a robust monitoring, reporting, and verification framework, and commitment to 4-country coordination on nature's protection. Furthermore, as the UK continues its COP26 Presidency, we call for the four Governments to carry the momentum from COP26 and champion ambition in the CBD process at COP15, highlighting the synergies of acting on the twin climate and nature crises simultaneously.

To promote our recommendations and raise awareness of the Convention on Biological Diversity amongst Parliamentarians, we co-organised and ran a successful event with Westminster MPs earlier in 2021, with further advocacy activities planned for 2022. Alongside awareness-raising in Parliament, last year also saw the first COP15 information session for Link members, which was well-attended and will continue on a monthly basis in 2022. These sessions provide updates on political developments around the talks and will act as a touchpoint for organisations to learn more about the COP15 campaign which Link will be delivering with RSPB.

Carbon offsetting in the UK

2021 saw the start of a new work area for Link. With the market for voluntary offsets expected to grow rapidly over the coming years and the new, post-Brexit UK Emissions Trading Scheme still in development, Link launched a [report](#) in April to highlight the shortcomings of policy and regulation to support nature-based solutions through both the voluntary and regulated carbon markets. We noted the concerns that widespread use of offsetting could cover up business-as-usual emissions, or that nature-based solutions – whether linked to markets or not – are carried out in a way that is harmful to biodiversity or the local communities where they are created. The report also addressed the issue of carbon offsetting in the regulated market.

We secured funding to develop our recommendations further as part of a project that will extend throughout much of 2022. This work will identify the strong standards needed for offsets across a range of habitat types, and set out the role that carbon markets can play within the UK Government's broader environmental agenda and land use policies.

Trustees' Report (continued)

Securing nature recovery at the local level

May 2021 saw the completion of five pilot projects that ran from autumn 2020 to test the process of developing Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRSs). A new work stream was set up to assess the pilots and subsequently influence the guidelines and regulations. Once the group had access to all the outputs from the pilots, they put together a [comprehensive briefing](#), which was then published and shared widely. This helped inform the [response](#) to the LNRS consultation.

Further work went into [estimating the resources](#) that will be required to successfully deliver LNRSs, which was then used to [advocate for sufficient allocation](#) of funding from Defra's uplift in the comprehensive spending review via written parliamentary questions. The statutory guidelines and regulations should be published in the spring, after which Responsible Authorities will be appointed and LNRSs process begins. Link are continuing to work on influencing what is put in place through engagement with Defra and through developing a vision of how LNRSs and Environmental Land Management Schemes should be integrated.

Link continues to respond to nature recovery policy opportunities as they come up. This can require light-footed work, drawing on Link member expertise outside of the framework of established policy groups.

In 2021, such interventions included:

- A [paper](#) setting out the case for major infrastructure to be included within Biodiversity Net Gain. This recommendation was then adopted within the Environment Act.
- A [response](#) to the consultation on the future of the UK Forestry Standard, which made the case for more nature-friendly woodland creation practices. Link engages in woodland policy through a light-touch, informal policy group.
- Advocacy [work](#) to strengthen new regulations to restrict heather burning on upland peat. This work will continue in 2022, as data on the effectiveness of the new regulations becomes available.

Structure, Governance and Management

Leadership

Link's Board of Trustees, and its Finance and Resources Sub Committee, each held four meetings during 2021.

In 2021, David Lind, Nikki Williams and Nicola Hutchinson came to the end of their time with the Board. We would like to thank them for dedicated and exceptional service. We welcome four new Board members: Nadia Shaikh, Sarah McMonagle, Allison Ogden-Newton and Jason Reeves.

The organisation is a charitable company limited by guarantee, incorporated on 7 December 1999 and registered as a charity on 5 January 2005. Members of the Board of Trustees are Directors for the purpose of Company Law and Trustees for the purpose of Charity Law. Members who served during the year, and up to the date of this report, are set out on Page 3.

The company was established under a Memorandum of Association which established the objects and powers of the charitable company and is governed under its Articles of Association. In 2007 the Memorandum and Articles of Association were reviewed, both to ensure compliance with the Companies Act (2006) and Charities Act (2006). Recognising the need to update the Articles, a further review was carried out in 2017/18 and the updated Articles were agreed upon by members at a special General Meeting on 22 May 2020.

Under the Articles, the members of the Board of Trustees are elected by a postal vote in advance or by secret ballot at the Annual General Meeting. Members of the Board of Trustees must retire at the third Annual General Meeting after that at which he or she was first elected, and is eligible for re-election for up to a further term ending on the sixth Annual General Meeting after their first election. The Treasurer must retire at the Annual General Meeting every three years but may stand for re-election with no maximum term of office.

Trustees' Report (continued)

Risk Management

Wildlife and Countryside Link views the management of risk as an integral element of its governance processes. The major risks to which the charity is exposed, as identified by Link's Director and Trustees, are reviewed annually with systems in place to mitigate those risks. It is recognised that any control system can only provide reasonable, but not absolute, assurance that major risks have been managed adequately.

The two main risks and uncertainties that face the charity, as identified in the Risk Register, include risks to income and reputation. Link aims to mitigate these risks by scrutinising the finances through the Finance and Resources Sub-Committee, by diversifying our funding sources, horizon scanning with members, non-members and other stakeholders, and regularly communicating with our member organisations to ensure they are updated, engaged and benefitting from their membership of Link.

The Link team adheres to protocols and procedures, with the finances being closely monitored to ensure expenditure is appropriate and within reasonable limits, and that adequate resources are in place. Link's Communications Manager also works with our Director and Trustees to reduce potential risks to Link's reputation.

Wildlife and Countryside Link has a health and safety policy to provide adequate control of the health and safety risks arising from our work activities. Each new joiner given an induction in the most up to date health & safety policy.

Pay Policy for senior staff

The Trustees consider that the Board of Trustees and the senior management team comprise the key management personnel of the charity in charge of directing and controlling, running and operating the Charity on a day-to-day basis. Day-to-day operational responsibility is delegated from Trustees to the CEO and senior team. All Trustees give of their time freely and no Trustee received remuneration in the year. Details of Trustees' expenses and related party transactions are disclosed in Note 6 to the accounts.

We have reviewed the pay and rewards given to staff to ensure we give fair terms in line with other similar organisations.

Preparation of the report

This report has been prepared taking advantage of the small companies' exemption of section 415A of the Companies Act 2006.

Exemptions from Disclosure

There are no exemptions required.

Funds held as custodian Trustee on behalf of others

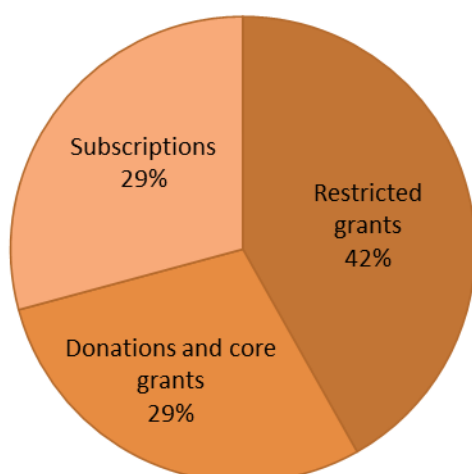
Link does not have a custodian Trustee.

Trustees' Report (continued)

Financial Review

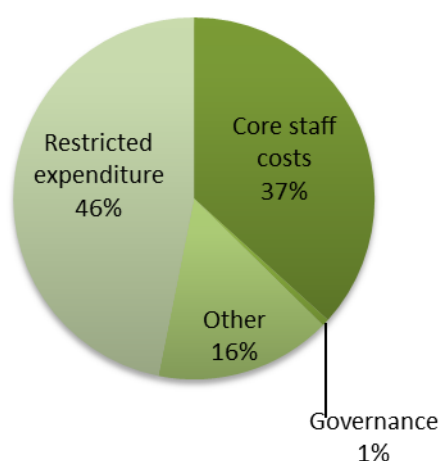
Here we summarise financial information to give an overview of the charity's financial performance during 2021, by using selected information from the full annual accounts. The full accounts are set out at page 17 and thereafter.

2021 Income



During 2021, a number of restricted grants contributed towards funding the ongoing implementation of Link's five year Strategy 2020-25. Link's total income in 2021 was £675,485 (2020 £483,159). Member subscriptions for the year totalled £197,131 (2020 £182,957).

2021 Expenditure



Link's total expenditure amounted to £470,929 (2020 £344,242).

Total expenditure on staff costs are shown in note 5, which totalled £327,218. As in past years, this does not take account of the contribution made to Link's collaborative work by staff within our member organisations, who help us to achieve so much. These results show that Link has, and continues to, develop a secure financial model based on member subscriptions with a level of grants that allow Link to maximise its effectiveness for its members.

Trustees' Report (continued)

Reserves Policy

Link's Reserve policy is to maintain free reserves of six months operating expenditure, over a rolling period of three years. This allows Link's Board of Trustees to maximise the use of the financial reserves but demands a plan to achieve the policy. At 31 December 2021, free reserves (in the general fund) amounted to 11.1 months of total 2021 expenditure. This level of reserves will allow Link to continue to implement the current interim Strategy.

Grants

Link secured valuable grant funding in 2021 to support its work with members for the next several years. Link confirmed another four years of funding from the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation for 2022 to 2025 and three years of funding from the John Ellerman Foundation for 2021 - 2023. This unrestricted core funding will help support the salary costs of the core team, including Link's CEO, Head of Advocacy, and Policy and Information Coordinators. These unrestricted funds, in addition to other unrestricted core income from member subscriptions, are essential for Link's core policy work that helps the organisation deliver on its own objectives on areas such as wildlife crime, the freshwater environment, agriculture, and nature and wellbeing.

Link also secured restricted funds to support particular Policy Officers and projects, including grants from the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation to support the Head of Communications and the Marine Policy Officer, from Natural England to fund a Local Nature Recovery Strategies Policy Officer, from Green Alliance for a project on Green Recovery, the European Climate Foundation to support carbon offsetting work, and from Esmee, Joseph Rowntree, John Ellerman and Natural England for an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion project.

Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic

In addition to the risks that the Trustees have identified and considered, the Trustees have given due consideration for the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic upon the charity's current and future activities. There will be a no negative financial impact in the short-term due to access to emergency funding from Esmee Fairbairn Foundation and the other successful grant applications. There is a manageable medium term risk of some effects on membership and Link is keeping some additional reserves to cover that eventuality.

The charity has put in a range of steps in line with available guidance from HM Government to mitigate this threat to the charity. We have reviewed our budgets and forecasts for a period of at least one year from the date of approval of the financial statements. The Trustees have concluded that there is a reasonable expectation that the Charity has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. The Charity therefore continues to adopt the going concern basis in preparing its financial statements.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all of those individuals and organisations that made 2021 such a great year for Link, including our members, partners, funders and colleagues. With their generous support, we will continue to work hard in 2022 and beyond to conserve and protect wildlife and the countryside.

Preparation of the report

This report has been prepared taking advantage of the small companies' exemption of section 415A of the Companies Act 2006. It was approved, and authorised for issue, by the Trustees on 23 May 2022 and signed on its behalf by:



Martin Spray CBE, Chair of Wildlife & Countryside Link

Independent Examiners Report to the Members of Wildlife and Countryside Link

I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the accounts of the Company for the year ended 31 December 2021 as set out on pages 17 to 29.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity's trustees of the Company (who are also the directors of the company for the purposes of company law), you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 ("the 2006 Act").

Having satisfied myself that the accounts of the Company are not required to be audited for this year under Part 16 of the 2006 Act and are eligible for independent examination, I report in respect of my examination of your charity's accounts as carried out under section 145 of the Charities Act 2011 ("the 2011 Act"). In carrying out my examination, I have followed the Directions given by the Charity Commission (under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act).

This report is made solely to the charity's trustees, as a body. My work has been undertaken so that I might state to the charity's trustees those matters which I am required to state to them in an independent examiners report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, I do not accept or assume responsibility to any party other than the charity and charity's trustees as a body, for my examination, for this report, or for the statement I have given below.

Independent examiner's statement

The charity's gross income exceeded £250,000 and I am qualified to undertake the examination by being a qualified member of The Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales.

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention which gives me cause to believe that:

- accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 386 of the Companies Act 2006; or
- the accounts do not accord with such records; or
- the accounts do not comply with relevant accounting requirements under section 396 of the Companies Act 2006 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair' view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination; or
- the accounts have not been prepared in accordance with the Charities SORP (FRS102).

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



JOHN SPEED FCA FCIE

JS2 Limited
One Crown Square
Woking
Surrey
GU21 6HR

Date: 8 June 2022

Statement of Financial Activities**For the year ended 31 December 2021****(Incorporating the Income and Expenditure Account)**

	Notes	Unrestricted Funds 2021 £	Restricted Funds 2021 £	Total Funds 2021 £	Total Funds 2020 £
INCOME FROM					
Donations and legacies	2	191,873	3,900	195,773	186,733
Income from Charitable activities:					
Grants for project work	10	-	282,478	282,478	113,050
Subscriptions		197,131	-	197,131	182,957
Other trading activities:					
Income from investments		103	-	103	419
TOTAL INCOME		389,107	286,378	675,485	483,159
EXPENDITURE ON					
Expenditure on Charitable activities	3	250,356	220,573	470,929	344,242
TOTAL EXPENDITURE		250,356	220,573	470,929	344,242
Net Income		138,751	65,805	204,556	138,917
Transfers between funds	10	-	-	-	-
NET MOVEMENT IN FUNDS		138,751	65,805	204,556	138,917
TOTAL FUNDS BROUGHT FORWARD		295,908	81,856	377,764	238,847
TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD		£ 434,659	£ 147,661	£ 582,320	£ 377,764

All of the above results are derived from continuing activities.

There were no recognised gains and losses other than those stated above.

Registered Company number 03889519

Balance Sheet**As at 31 December 2021**

	Notes	£	2021 £	£	2020 £
FIXED ASSETS					
Tangible assets	7		6,180		9,509
CURRENT ASSETS					
Debtors	8	11,415		41,703	
Cash at bank and in hand		610,160		400,206	
		621,575		441,909	
CREDITORS: amounts falling due within one year	9	(45,435)		(73,654)	
NET CURRENT ASSETS			576,140		368,255
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES			582,320		377,764
NET ASSETS			£ 582,320		£ 377,764
FUNDS					
Restricted funds			147,661		81,856
General fund (unrestricted)			434,659		295,908
			£ 582,320		£ 377,764

For the year ending 31 December 2021 the Company was entitled to exemption from audit under section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies.

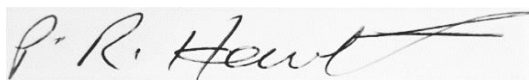
The members have not required the company to obtain an audit of its accounts for the year in question in accordance with section 476.

The directors acknowledge their responsibility for complying with the requirements of the Act with respect to accounting records and for the preparation of accounts.

These accounts have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies subject to the small companies' regime. They were approved and authorised for issue by the directors on 23 May 2022 and signed on their behalf by:-



Martin Spray, Chair



Philip Hewetson, Treasurer

Statement of Cash Flows**For the year ended 31 December 2021**

	£	2021 £	£	2020 £
CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES:				
Net income for the year	204,556		138,917	
Adjustments for:				
Depreciation charges	3,329		4,922	
Interest	(103)		(419)	
Decrease/ (increase) in debtors	30,288		(27,309)	
Decrease/ (increase) in creditors	(28,219)		60,359	
NET CASH PROVIDED BY OPERATING ACTIVITIES:		209,851		176,470
CASH FLOWS FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES:				
Interest	103		419	
Purchase of tangible fixed assets	-		(9,475)	
NET CASH PROVIDED BY/ (USED IN) INVESTING ACTIVITIES:		103		(9,056)
Change in cash and cash equivalents in the year		209,954		167,414
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year		400,206		232,792
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year	£	610,160	£	400,206

Notes to the Financial Statements

For the year ended 31 December 2021

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

Basis of preparation of financial statements

These financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention and in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102). The Charity is a public benefit entity for the purposes of FRS 102 and therefore has also prepared the financial statements in accordance with the Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (The FRS 102 Charities SORP) and the Charities Act 2011.

Going Concern

In addition to the risks that the Trustees have identified and considered, the Trustees have given due consideration for the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic upon the charity's current and future activities. There will be no negative financial impact in the short-term due to access to emergency funding from Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and the other successful grant applications. There is a manageable medium term risk of some effects on membership and Link is keeping some additional reserves to cover that eventuality.

The charity has put in a range of steps in line with available guidance from HM Government to mitigate this threat to the charity. We have reviewed our budgets and forecasts for a period of at least one year from the date of approval of the financial statements. The Trustees have concluded that there is a reasonable expectation that the Charity has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. The Charity therefore continues to adopt the going concern basis in preparing its financial statements.

Company status

The Charity is a company limited by guarantee. In the event of the Charity being wound up, the liability in respect of the guarantee is limited to £1 per member of the Charity.

Fund accounting

General funds are unrestricted funds which are available for use at the discretion of the Trustees in furtherance of the general objectives of the Charity and which have not been designated for other purposes.

Restricted funds are funds which are to be used in accordance with specific restrictions imposed by donors or which have been raised by the Charity for particular purposes. The costs of raising such funds are charged against the specific fund. The aim and use of each restricted fund is set out in the notes to the financial statements.

Income

All income is included in the Statement of financial activities when the Charity has entitlement to the funds, certainty of receipt and the amount can be measured with sufficient reliability.

Subscription income from full and associate member organisations is invoiced on a calendar year basis and is recognised accordingly.

Grants are recognised as income in the Statement of financial activities in accordance with the terms attached by the grantor.

Income from recharged costs is accrued when the associated costs are incurred. Other donations and sundry income are recognised in the Statement of financial activities when received.

Notes to the Financial Statements (continued)

Expenditure

Expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis and has been included under expense categories that aggregate all costs for allocation to activities. Where costs cannot be directly attributed to particular activities they have been allocated on a basis consistent with the use of the resources.

Governance costs are those incurred in connection with compliance with constitutional and statutory requirements.

Tangible fixed assets and depreciation

All assets costing more than £1,000 are capitalised.

Tangible fixed assets are stated at cost less depreciation. Depreciation is provided at rates calculated to write off the cost of fixed assets, less their estimated residual value, over their expected useful lives on the following bases:

Fixtures and fittings -	4 years
Office equipment -	4 years
IT equipment -	4 years

Operating leases

Rentals under operating leases are charged to the Statement of financial activities on a straight line basis over the lease term.

2. DONATIONS AND LEGACIES

	Unrestricted Funds 2021 £	Restricted Funds 2021 £	Total Funds 2021 £	Total Funds 2020 £
Donations	99	3,900	3,999	1,950
Government grant: Furlough scheme	2,286	-	2,286	3,907
Grants for core funding	189,488	-	189,488	180,876
	£ 191,873	£ 3,900	£ 195,773	£ 186,733

In 2020 all voluntary income was unrestricted.

Notes to the Financial Statements (continued)

**3. CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES:
FACILITATION, COORDINATION & INFORMATION PROVISION****CURRENT YEAR**

	Unrestricted Funds 2021 £	Restricted Funds 2021 £	Total Funds 2021 £	Total Funds 2020 £
Staff costs	172,889	154,329	327,218	255,567
Support costs (see Note 4)	3,044	-	3,044	5,302
Other costs	74,423	66,244	140,667	83,373
	£ 250,356	£ 220,573	£ 470,929	£ 344,242

PRIOR YEAR

	Unrestricted Funds 2020 £	Restricted Funds 2020 £	Total Funds 2020 £
Staff costs	185,162	70,405	255,567
Support costs (see Note 4)	5,302	-	5,302
Other costs	67,813	15,560	83,373
	£ 258,277	£ 85,965	£ 344,242

Expenditure includes:

	2021 £	2020 £
Rent	28,035	28,097

4. SUPPORT COSTS

	Unrestricted Funds 2021 £	Restricted Funds 2021 £	Total Funds 2021 £	Total Funds 2020 £
GOVERNANCE:				
Independent Examiner:				
Preparation of Statutory Accounts	1,638	-	1,638	1,560
Independent Examination	1,332	-	1,332	1,260
Legal and professional fees	13	-	13	2,400
Other expenses	61	-	61	82
	£ 3,044	£ Nil	£ 3,044	£ 5,302

In 2020 all support costs were unrestricted.

Notes to the Financial Statements (continued)**5. STAFF NUMBERS AND COSTS**

	2021	2020
	£	£
Wages and salaries	289,012	224,347
Social security costs	24,246	18,925
Pension costs	13,960	12,295
	£ 327,218	£ 255,567
	Number	Number
The average headcount during the year was as follows:	9.5	6.3

One employee received remuneration of between £60,000 and £70,000 in the year (exclusive of employer pensions and employer National Insurance contributions). (2020: 1 employee was paid between £60,000 and £70,000). The employer pension contributions for that member of staff amounted to £3,600 in the year.

The key management personnel of the Charity comprise all staff members. The total employee benefits of the key management personnel of the Charity were as disclosed above.

6. RELATED PARTY DISCLOSURES

During the year, no trustee received any remuneration (2020: Nil). Expenses for travel and subsistence were reimbursed to 1 Trustee and amounted to £97 (2020: Nil).

Due to the nature of the Charity's work, its Trustees are often Trustees or employees of member organisations. Member subscriptions for these organisations are always calculated on the same basis as for other members.

7. TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

	Fixtures and fittings £	Office equipment £	IT equipment £	Total £
Cost				
At 1 January 2021	9,017	32,849	2,160	44,026
Additions	-	-	-	-
At 31 December 2021	9,017	32,849	2,160	44,026
Depreciation				
At 1 January 2021	4,214	29,880	423	34,517
Charge for the year	1,500	1,289	540	3,329
At 31 December 2021	5,714	31,169	963	37,846
Net book value				
At 31 December 2020	4,803	2,969	1,737	9,509
At 31 December 2021	3,303	1,680	1,197	6,180

Notes to the Financial Statements (continued)**8. DEBTORS**

	2021	2020
	£	£
Prepayments	3,607	2,816
Trade debtors	300	31,379
Other debtors	7,508	7,508
	<u>£ 11,415</u>	<u>£ 41,703</u>

9. CREDITORS: AMOUNTS FALLING DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR

	2021	2020
	£	£
Accruals	32,192	7,959
Deferred income (see below)	1,000	55,755
Trade creditors	2,523	2,494
Taxation and social security	7,894	6,151
Pensions	1,826	1,295
	<u>£ 45,435</u>	<u>£ 73,654</u>

Deferred income:

Balance brought forward	55,755	13,295
Amount released to income	(55,755)	(13,295)
Amount deferred in the year (grants and subscriptions for the following year)	1,000	55,755
	<u>£ 1,000</u>	<u>£ 55,755</u>

Notes to the Financial Statements (continued)

10. STATEMENT OF FUNDS - CURRENT YEAR

	Brought Forward 1 January 2021 £	Income £	Expenditure £	Transfers £	Carried Forward 31 December 2021 £
RESTRICTED FUNDS					
I Environment Links UK	3,225	-	(1,594)	-	1,631
II Agriculture	1,179	-	(100)	-	1,079
III Marine Projects	22,832	38,000	(28,488)	-	32,344
IV Blueprint for Water	-	3,750	(2,904)	-	846
V Planning Coalition	289	-	-	-	289
VI Head of Communications	31,032	21,000	(18,133)	-	33,899
VII Wildlife Crime and Trade	400	-	(400)	-	-
VIII Convention on Biological Diversity	8,199	-	(8,199)	-	-
IX Environmental Funders Network	14,700	-	(14,700)	-	-
X DWP Kickstart Scheme	-	6,065	(6,065)	-	-
XI Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	-	74,999	(47,896)	-	27,103
XII European Climate Foundation - climate, NBS	-	41,206	(11,573)	-	29,633
XIII Green Recovery	-	55,000	(34,313)	-	20,687
XIV Local Nature Recovery Strategies	-	20,208	(20,208)	-	-
XV Peer Support Network for People of Colour	-	150	-	-	150
XVI State of Nature campaign	-	26,000	(26,000)	-	-
	81,856	286,378	(220,573)	-	147,661
GENERAL FUND	295,908	389,107	(250,356)	-	434,659
TOTAL FUNDS	£ 377,764	£ 675,485	£ (470,929)	£ Nil	£ 582,320

Purposes of restricted funds:

I **Environment Links UK**

The WWF-UK Environment Links UK (ELUK) project grant supports the four Link organisations in the UK (Wildlife and Countryside Link, Wales Environment Link, Scottish Environment LINK and Northern Ireland Environment Link) in updating each other and collaborating on work programmes, key priorities, and operational matters, through meetings, email communications and conference calls. Expenditure from this fund in 2021 was on costs to a facilitator for the UK Link Biennial events and for a meeting room hire for an ELUK meeting in Glasgow.

II **Agriculture**

This project relates to the activities of Link's Agriculture Working Group. Expenditure is due to one bad debt from 2019 written off in 2021.

III **Marine Projects**

Money within this restricted fund relates primarily to costs of employing the Marine Policy Officer. Income from the second installment of a 2-year grant from Calouste Gulbenkian for 2021 and a grant from Network for Social Change for marine projects. Expenditure related to the salary costs, NI costs and pension costs of the Marine Policy Officer from March 2021 (when Matt Dawson started) to December 2021.

Notes to the Financial Statements (continued)

10. STATEMENT OF FUNDS - CURRENT YEAR (CONTINUED)

IV **Blueprint for Water**

The Blueprint for Water project was set up in 2009 to fund the publication and distribution of the Blueprint coalition's third report. This project relates to the activities of Link's Blueprint working group. Income in 2021 as donations from member organisations to design the Blueprint Vision and PR24 report. Expenditure was on the two report designs and an editable template for the report.

V **Planning Coalition**

The Planning Coalition fund was set up in 2010 to cover costs associated with the publication and distribution of the new Greenest Planning Ever Coalition's 'Vision for the Future of Planning' report. £289 was carried over into 2018. No funds have been spent since 2014 and £289 has been carried forward into 2019. No transactions in this fund in 2021.

VI **Head of Communications**

Money within this restricted fund relates primarily to costs of employing Link's Communications Manager. Income in 2021 is the first of two installments from a Calouste Gulbenkian 2-year grant to fund Link Head of Comms, Emma Adler. Expenditure is Emma A's salary, eNIC and pension (partial - 2/3 attributed to this fund, 1/3 of her employment costs to the State of Nature fund), from April 2021 to December 2021.

VII **Wildlife Crime and Trade**

This project relates to the activities of Link's Wildlife Crime Working Group. No funds were carried over into the beginning of 2018. No income to this fund in 2021. The expenditure in this fund in 2021 was for the design of the annual Wildlife Crime Report (a portion of the payment, the rest of the payment went to unrestricted general funds).

VIII **Convention on Biological Diversity**

This project relates to the activities of Link's CBD Policy Officer coordinating with other Links to collaborate on UK-wide response to upcoming COP15 and COP26. Income in 2020 from a restricted grant for this work from Esmee Fairbairn Foundation. Expenditure on the CBD Policy Officer's salary, NI costs and pension costs from January 2021 to March 2021, and a video design cost.

IX **Environmental Funders Network**

This project relates to the activities of Link's work on the National Nature Service. Income from restricted grants from a variety of funders from the 'Environmental Funders Network', expenditure on design and communications related to the NNS, and a policy officer's salary to work on NNS (Matt Browne's salary from Jan 2021 to May 2021).

X **DWP Kickstart Scheme**

This project relates to the employment of an intern through the DWP Kickstart Race for Nature program for 6 months from May 2021 to November 2021. Link received partial funds to cover the salary of an intern, and the intern also received direct training and support from DWP.

XI **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion**

This project relates to the 'State of the Sector EDI Report' commissioned by WCL to consultancy Full Colour. Income includes large grants for the report from John Ellerman, Natural England, Joseph Rowntree, and Esmee Fairbairn. Expenditure relates to paying the consultancy Full Colour for 2/3rds of the work done in 2021 (one third expected to be done in 2022) and paying VOYAGE for youth consultancy services.

Notes to the Financial Statements (continued)

10. STATEMENT OF FUNDS - CURRENT YEAR (CONTINUED)

XII European Climate Foundation - climate, NBS

This project relates to the project on climate and NBS and employment of a WCL Policy Officer to carry out this work. Income is grant from ECF. Expenditure is on policy officer Imogen's salary, pension and eNIC from September 2021 to December 2021.

XIII Green Recovery

This project relates to the project on green recovery and the employment of a WCL Policy Officer to carry out this work. Income is grant from Green Alliance. Expenditure is Hannah's salary, pension and eNIC from January 2021 to December 2021.

XIV Local Nature Recovery Strategies

This project relates to the project on LNRs and the employment of a WCL Policy Officer to carry out this work. Income is grant from Natural England, via Woodland Trust. Expenditure is Bruce's salary, pension and eNIC from January 2021 to December 2021 and partial payment of his laptop.

XV Peer Support Network for People of Colour

This project relates to the Peer Support Network for People of Colour, supported by Link. The income was from two donations to the work of this group by member organisations. There was no expenditure in 2021.

XVI State of Nature campaign

This project relates to the State of Nature campaign for legally binding targets for species abundance in the Environment Bill, run by Link in collaboration with member organisations. The income was from the Environmental Funders Network (Roger Manser, Mr Brown, James Thornton), the Waterloo Foundation, and a donation from RSPB, a member. Expenditure was various and related to the campaign materials and activity in 2021, 1/3 of Richard Benwell's salary for 2 months and 1/3 of Emma Adler's Head of Comms salary for 10 months for time on the campaign. The campaign concluded with a win in 2021.

Notes to the Financial Statements (continued)

11. STATEMENT OF FUNDS - PRIOR YEAR

	<i>Brought Forward 1 January 2020 £</i>	<i>Income £</i>	<i>Expenditure £</i>	<i>Transfers £</i>	<i>Carried Forward 31 December 2020 £</i>
RESTRICTED FUNDS					
I Environment Links UK	3,754	-	(529)	-	3,225
II Agriculture	885	1,050	(756)	-	1,179
III Marine Projects	12,813	36,000	(25,981)	-	22,832
IV Blueprint for Water	5,475	-	(5,475)	-	-
V Planning Coalition	289	-	-	-	289
VI Head of Communications	31,155	37,500	(37,623)	-	31,032
VII Wildlife Crime and Trade	400	-	-	-	400
VII Convention on Biological Diversity	-	15,000	(6,801)	-	8,199
VIII Environmental Funders Network	-	23,500	(8,800)	-	14,700
	<u>54,771</u>	<u>113,050</u>	<u>(85,965)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>81,856</u>
GENERAL FUND	184,076	370,109	(258,277)	-	295,908
TOTAL FUNDS	<u>238,847</u>	<u>483,159</u>	<u>(344,242)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>377,764</u>

12. ANALYSIS OF NET ASSETS BETWEEN FUNDS

Current Year	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds £
Tangible fixed assets	6,180	-	6,180
Net current assets	<u>428,479</u>	<u>147,661</u>	<u>576,140</u>
	<u>£ 434,659</u>	<u>£ 147,661</u>	<u>£ 582,320</u>
 <i>Prior Year</i>	 <i>Unrestricted Funds £</i>	 <i>Restricted Funds £</i>	 <i>Total Funds £</i>
Tangible fixed assets	9,509	-	9,509
Net current assets	<u>286,399</u>	<u>81,856</u>	<u>368,255</u>
	<u>£ 295,908</u>	<u>£ 81,856</u>	<u>£ 377,764</u>

Notes to the Financial Statements (continued)**13. OPERATING LEASE COMMITMENTS**

At the year end the Charity had total commitments under the non-cancellable operating lease on its premises repayable as follows:

	2021 £	2020 £
Operating leases which expire:		
within one year	7,447	29,431
within two to five years	-	7,447
	<u>£ 7,447</u>	<u>£ 36,878</u>

Accounts

Wildlife and
Countryside



Wildlife and Countryside Link

(A company limited by guarantee)

Company number: 03889519

Annual Report 2020

The Trustees submit their report together with the financial statements of Wildlife and Countryside Link for the year ended 31 December 2020.

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A Message from Link's Chair

To say that 2020 has been an extraordinary year is an understatement. It has brought with it considerable challenges for everyone and Link's members. Human suffering and economic calamity have filled 2020 and bring with them the risk that the climate and ecological emergencies will be deprioritised in political decision-making. At the same time, the environment and animal welfare movement has itself been severely weakened by the financial and practical consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. Add to this mix the legal and policy fluidity brought by Brexit and 2020 could easily have been the undoing of environmental action in the UK.

That has not happened. Despite serious policy risks from planning reform, infrastructure spending and deregulation, the environmental agenda has remained strong. Thanks to our members, Wildlife and Countryside Link has been able to play an important part in maintaining the resolve, direction and policy capability of our movement in these difficult days.

Link's work analysing the implications of the pandemic for our sector and making representations to Government for a green recovery helped to secure invaluable government funding, such as the Green Recovery Challenge Fund. Our work on the National Nature Service helped to give the idea of green renewal public resonance, emphasising especially the importance of equitable access to nature, at a time when social disparities have been more evident than ever.

At the same time, Link's policy work has continued apace. The coalition has helped to bring to light the environmental risks of planning reform, demonstrating the need for new strategic approaches on the Nature Recovery Network and the need to protect 30% of the land and sea for nature's recovery, while defending the importance of site-based surveys and local decision-making in the current system. In the world of water policy, there is a huge amount of technical work, which we see as part of Blueprint's special purpose as individual organisations may not have the capacity. At the same time, the need for an evocative case for investment in freshwater ecosystems is more apparent than ever, with the news that not a single river is in good status.

On the legislative front, work on the Environment Bill has pressed on, even while the bill itself was allowed to stall in Parliament. Link has worked behind the scenes, developing proposals on targets, water, waste and the nature chapters. We are delighted to be working in close partnership with Greener UK, who have taken forward that policy work in Parliament. In particular, our work on targets has set out a comprehensive position for the sector, and represents an exciting new way of working for Link, bringing together input from across our working groups in a new project-based approach. We are grateful to everyone who contributed.

While the Agriculture Act and Fisheries Act have received Royal Assent, the work on agriculture and marine protection has continued. In both areas, there is pressure from some elements of the industry to increase catch or production in the short term at the expense of nature and long-term productivity. Maintaining the intellectual and ethical case for public money for public goods and for marine recovery will be a long struggle yet, particularly in the tumult of exit from the European Union.

Next year, we expect legislation on planning reform, for which our focus will be maintaining the best of the current system, while taking the opportunity for more strategic attention on nature's recovery. We will also be pressing for new animal welfare legislation, with a bold range of recommendations including action on wildlife crime, wild animal protection, animal sentience, and standards for domestic and farmed animals.

In 2021, we hope to work more closely than ever with our partner organisations and other coalitions, so that we can make the most of the great international opportunities of the G7, the Global Ocean Conference, the Convention on Biological Diversity, and UN climate talks in Glasgow. We will be using these international moments to try press for more domestic action, in concert with the Links around the UK.

Our sector may be weakened by the pandemic, but we are resilient in our collaboration and resolute in our purpose. In this critical year ahead, we are grateful for the work we do together and hopeful that we can make this year a turning point for wellbeing, welfare, wildlife and the state of nature.

Martin Spray CBE DSc (Hon), Chair, Wildlife and Countryside Link

Richard Benwell, CEO, Wildlife and Countryside Link



Reference and Administrative Details

Link Trustees

Martin Spray, Chair	(appointed December 2018)
Nicola Hutchinson, Vice Chair	(appointed December 2013)
Philip Hewetson, Treasurer	(appointed December 2020)
David Lind	(resigned December 2020)
Dominic Dyer	(appointed December 2018)
Marcus Gilleard	(appointed March 2015)
Sandy Luk	(appointed December 2018)
Simon Marsh	(appointed December 2018)
Nikki Williams	(resigned December 2020)

Company Registered Number
03889519

Charity Registered Number
1107460

Principal Office Address

N101C Vox Studios, 1-45 Durham Street
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SE11 5JH

Company Secretary and CEO

Dr Richard Benwell

Independent Examiner

John Speed
JS2 Limited
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Woking
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Bankers

The Co-operative Bank
PO Box 101
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Manchester
M60 4EP

Nationwide
5-11 St George's Street
Douglas
Isle of Man
IM99 1RN

Solicitors

Russell-Cooke Solicitors
2 Putney Hill
London
SW15 6A

Trustees' Report

Objectives and Activities

The charitable objects of Wildlife and Countryside Link are to promote the conservation and protection of wildlife and countryside for the benefit of the public.

Our objectives and strategy

Wildlife and Countryside Link (Link) is the largest environment and wildlife coalition in England, bringing together 57 organisations to use their strong joint voice for the protection of nature. Our members campaign to conserve, enhance and access our landscapes, habitats, rivers and seas and protect our animals and plants. Together we have the support of over eight million people in the UK and directly protect over 750,000 hectares of land and 800 miles of coastline.

Since 1980, we have been facilitating collaboration between voluntary organisations in the UK. We work with our members, and others, to embrace a new, restorative approach, which rebuilds and protects nature and creates a more resilient natural environment for the benefit of wildlife and people.

We review our aims, objectives and activities each year. This review looks at what we achieved and the outcomes of our work in the previous 12 months. The review looks at the success of each key activity and the benefits they have brought to those groups of people we are set up to help. The review also helps us ensure our aim, objectives and activities remained focused on our stated purposes. We have referred to the guidance contained in the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit when reviewing our aim and objectives and in planning our future activities. In particular, the Trustees consider how planned activities will contribute to the aims and objectives they have set.

In 2020, we have been developing a more dynamic and responsive approach to our work. We are operating under an agreed interim strategy, as we take time to develop our next multi-year strategy. Our strategies to fulfil our charitable objects include:

- We aim to be a **policy powerhouse** for the sector: keeping a broad overview, but targeting a small number of strategic areas where we can generate new, detailed and ambitious policy proposals that will influence policymakers. Our policy groups will forge progressive consensus: aiming for strong, common positions that complement individual members' work.
- We aim to be an **amplifier for our individual voices**: highlighting great work in our membership and lending focus and coherence to our common messages in the press and in political advocacy. Our communications will reflect and reinforce members' communications: creating opportunities for members large and small, as well as providing a collective identity in the media and in Westminster.
- We aim to be a **strategic hub and institutional touchpoint**: providing leadership in agreeing cross-sector strategic direction, supporting our members in Westminster, and acting as a nodal point for working with other groups. Our secretariat will lead and serve: adding value to members' interactions by identifying strategic opportunities, creating alliances and providing professional policy insight.

Our working groups remain the stalwarts of our policy work, providing a backbone of policy thinking for the sector. They ensure that important consultations and policy agendas are properly addressed by the sector, whether large and high profile, or concise and technical. Working together, we want to ensure that every organisation can lend its expertise to add to our joint voice, even where they would not be able to do so individually. In this way, our core activities are tightly focused on delivering public benefit by generating innovative and compelling shared policy positions that can influence law and policy for the improvement of the natural environment.

At the same time, we are working through more targeted project groups, developing rapid thinking in response to policy threats and opportunities, then disbanding or reforming to move on to the next. In this work, our network of policy thinkers has shown huge flexibility and alacrity, allowing us to respond quickly to

Trustees' Report (continued)

agendas like planning reform and targets development, with recognised influence in government. We are grateful to everyone who has contributed and look forward to more successful projects together next year.

Alongside our policy work, we aim to support members in their corporate governance and institutional development. During the pandemic, we have been a hub for understanding and expressing the practical and financial challenges faced by the sector.

In January 2020, we also set up our new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion group. All forms of inequality, including racism and racial inequality, must be rooted out of the environment and animal welfare movement wherever they are found. Many of our member organisations have already taken great steps in promoting inclusion and diversity and are committed to doing more (including by signing Link's agreed anti-racism statement). However, we recognise that our sector has not dealt with all forms of inequality, including systemic racism. We recognise that tackling these shortcomings is quite simply the right thing to do, and is wrapped up with our future as an ethical and progressive movement. The future of the sector and delivery of our charitable purposes all depend on improving the representativeness of our movement.

Challenges and future plans

The coronavirus crisis has seriously affected the environmental sector. The financial and practical effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have brought many environmental actions to a standstill. Many of our environment and animal charities have suffered a major loss of income—higher than we originally expected—which is likely to continue for months and even years ahead. This is likely to have a knock-on financial impact on Link, as well as a direct effect on delivery among our member organisations, which will require us all to consider new financial models and new ways of working.

These financial losses will have severe implications for our sector's ability to deliver practical conservation work and to undertake important legal and policy work in a time of unprecedented legal changes. At the same time, costs have risen. On the positive side, we have experienced unprecedented demand for access to our sites and services, and we want to make sure nature's benefits are available to everyone. On the negative side, we have seen extra concerns and costs from such wide-ranging issues as rising puppy-trafficking in lockdown, to vandalism and damage on nature reserves.

Our research in March on the immediate aftermath of the first COVID-19 lockdown demonstrated the short-term shockwaves and the sector's fears for the future. As the end of the financial year approaches, our update survey shows that many of those fears are becoming reality.

In this context, the importance of Link's work is greater than ever. In 2020, we have sought to fill gaps in policy and coordination capacity among our members, ensuring that important consultations, legislation and policy development processes are not affected. Our work to highlight the effects on the sector, the practical implications for conservation, and the opportunities offered by public investment in green jobs were instrumental in securing £80 million of investment in the sector from government in the Green Recovery Challenge Fund.

Next year, we will continue to develop a blend of support for our sector, broad-ranging policy coverage, and targeted and dynamic leadership in legislative and policy thinking. Demand for our work is growing, both from our members and partners, and from Government and Opposition. This is an encouraging sign that, if we work together, we can help avert the risks of deregulation and an unsustainable recovery, and steer the Government toward ambitious and lasting legal and policy changes for people, animals and our natural world.

Public Benefit requirement

The Trustees of Wildlife and Countryside Link confirm that the organisation has Charitable Purposes pursuant to the Charities Act 2011. The Trustees believe that there are clear and identifiable public benefits arising from the pursuit of Wildlife and Countryside Link's aims and objectives, and that these benefits are freely available to the public without restriction.

Trustees' Report (continued)

AGM

Link's Annual General Meeting took place on 3 December 2020 via Zoom. The AGM provided a timely opportunity to celebrate Link's achievements in 2020 and to look ahead to Link's plans for 2021, with presentations from Link's CEO, Dr. Richard Benwell.

Achievements and Performance

In 2020, Link was at the forefront of political debate, working closely with other coalitions to guard against the risks of political change and to create new opportunities for improvement.

In 2020, Link managed and provided support for 11 groups on the following policy areas:

- Agriculture: Chair, Christopher Price (Rare Breeds Survival Trust); Vice Chair, Tom Lancaster (RSPB)
- Animal Welfare: Chair, Claire Bass (Humane Society International-UK)
- Blueprint for Water: Chair, Ali Morse (The Wildlife Trusts); Vice Chair, Rhianon Niven (RSPB)
- Invasive Non-Native Species: Chair, Emily Smith (Angling Trust)
- Land Use Planning: Chair, Rebecca Pullinger (CPRE); Vice Chair, Carl Bunnage (RSPB)
- Legal Strategy: Chair, Carol Day (RSPB); Vice Chair, Rosie Sutherland (RSPB)
- Marine: Chair, Chris Tuckett (Marine Conservation Society)
- Marine Mammals: Chair, Mark Simmonds (Humane Society International-UK); Vice Chair, Lucy Babey (ORCA)
- Nature and Wellbeing Strategy Group: Co Chair, Matt William (National Trust); Co Chair, Dom Higgins (The Wildlife Trusts)
- Resources & Waste: Chair, Paula Chin (WWF-UK)
- Wildlife Crime and Trade: Chair, Martin Sims (League Against Cruel Sports); Vice Chair, Craig Fellows (Badger Trust)

Key achievements in 2020 include:

Towards a sustainable farming future

With the principle of public money for public goods enshrined in law under the Agriculture Act, Link's Agriculture Group focussed on the policy detail of Environmental Land Management (ELM). Details of the emerging scheme suggest it draws heavily on Link's previous work, however gaps remain in the fine detail, as well as the overarching aims and narrative behind ELM. With many farmers and land managers facing uncertainty over the future, Link will advocate for a positive vision of future of ELM and for more clarity in the fine detail of ELM schemes. 2021 will also see the beginning of a review on farm regulation and a replacement for cross-compliance. The Link Agriculture group will lobby to shift the environmental baseline of farming regulation upward, so that the standard of land management in England is greatly improved for nature.

Getting the best deal for animals post-Brexit

Link's Animal Welfare Strategy Group has worked hard to keep animal sentience on the agenda, in a year when the focus of Government has been elsewhere. An August letter to MPs, making the case for effective animal sentience legislation, was followed up by a roundtable in November. The roundtable, chaired by Lord Randall, saw Link members set out a pragmatic [blueprint](#) for a post-Brexit animal sentience duty on Ministers to an audience of parliamentarians, civil servants and campaigners. This work will continue into 2021, with the Group reminding the Government of its intention to progress major animal legislation swiftly after Brexit, including an animal sentience duty. The first fruits of that political commitment can be seen in 2021 consultations on live animal exports and primates as pets; Link responses to both consultations are underway.

Ranking water companies on environmental performance

The Blueprint for Water Group has had a busy 2020. In June, Blueprint published '[Changing Course](#)', outlining how commitments made under the 25 Year Environment Plan could be used to deliver for the water environment. Building on this work, the Group plans to outline a 'Vision' for a better future for our water environment in 2021. In July, we published the '[Naturally Resilient](#)' report in partnership with the water industry and the Environment Agency, as a first step to define resilience and its importance across sectors, and towards its incorporation into Government and water industry plans. We held a successful roundtable for the

Trustees' Report (continued)

project in November, and in 2021 the Group will establish a Naturally Resilient Taskforce. Blueprint will continue to engage with the water industry on environmental issues throughout the PR24 process, in particular with regional water groups. Blueprint has also supported wider Link work on the Environment Bill, and will continue to work on the water clauses for the Lords stage in 2021. The Group will also build on 2020 work to advocate for stronger regulation and adequate resources for the protection and enhancement of water quality, particularly through our work with the #EndSewagePollution coalition in supporting the Sewage (Inland Waters) Private Members' Bill, and our engagement with the Defra Storm Overflows Taskforce. The Group produced a [briefing for the Sewage \(Inland Waters\) Bill](#), and [responded to the Defra regulatory review](#) for the Farming Rules for Water at the start of 2021.

Safeguarding the UK from invasive species

The main focus for the INNS Group in 2020 was raising awareness of the need and advocating for increased funding and resources for tackling invasive species. The group produced the '[Prevention is Better Than Cure](#)' report, published in September. This outlined the threats posed by the significant underinvestment in UK invasive species biosecurity, and asked Defra to increase the invasive species biosecurity budget to £6 million to fund greater strategic control and a dedicated INNS inspectorate. The report had good media coverage, including [a Defra blog response](#). We await the result of the funding decision, which will direct our work in 2021, where the Group will continue to push for funding and resources for INNS, and continue to highlight the need for an inspectorate. The Group will also be exploring the much-neglected issue of reporting and recording INNS, for example, how these processes can be better coordinated, resourced, and publicised in order to effectively support the management of INNS.

Planning for people and wildlife

With the release of the Government's planning reforms in 2020, Link's Land Use Planning Group has been busy highlighting how planning can make a positive contribution to nature's recovery, rather than perpetuating the sustained habitat loss seen over recent decades. The group [responded](#) to the Government's 'Planning for the Future' proposals, held a Roundtable event for MPs on the [Planning White Paper and Nature](#), collaborated with 17 other organisations to launch a new [vision](#) for planning, and will continue policy and advocacy work leading up to the Planning Bill expected in the latter half of 2021. The group will also continue to advocate for provision in the Environment Bill such as biodiversity net gain and Local Nature Recovery Strategies that will be crucial for delivering widespread, strategic restoration of nature and the creation of habitat to deliver the 25 Year Environment Plan.

Supporting legal efforts to protect nature

Link's Legal Group has continued to provide expertise and views to other Link groups as required in 2020, including the provision of briefing material for Environment Bill advocacy work. The Group held a symposium in the summer to share knowledge and advice about legal developments with Habitats Regulations and plan to host more such knowledge-sharing events in 2021. 2021 will also see the progression of the Group's push back against efforts to water down judicial review. In 2020 the Group submitted a full [response](#) to the Faulks Independent Review of Administrative Law, highlighting the importance of retained judicial review rights for environmental groups. The Group will continue to robustly make this case in 2021.

Ensuring clean healthy and thriving seas

Link's Marine Group has had a busy year. Together with Environment Links UK (ELUK) the group [responded](#) to the consultation on the Marine Strategy (Part 2) and met with the Defra Marine team to discuss their proposals in more detail. After some Defra disruption in the first part of the year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the relationship between the Link Marine Group and the reformed Defra marine team has strengthened and constructive channels of communication are in place. These channels are going to be busy in 2021 as the Marine Group continues its 'Ocean Recovery' [campaign](#). Launched in June 2020 by a Link roundtable with Oceans Minister Rebecca Pow and progressed through a series of briefings in the autumn, the campaign aims to make ocean health a key policy priority going into COP26. Over the months ahead, the group plans to press points of strategic advantage on ocean recovery, including the potential to align ocean conservation with marine renewable energies and the role 'blue carbon' habitats can play in meeting the net zero target.

Trustees' Report (continued)

Protecting marine mammals

2020 saw a new era for Link's long-standing Whales Group, which became the Marine Mammals Group. This followed successful Link [lobbying](#) for a ban on seal-shooting in English waters – with this achieved it was felt that the Whales Group needed to expand to campaign for the protection of all mammals in English waters. The Group's international work also secured tangible progress, with the UK Government making a generous financial contribution to sustain International Whaling Commission operations in autumn 2020, following Link representations. Both international and domestic work will continue in 2021, including work on how new offshore energy projects can proceed without adversely impacting marine mammals.

Evolution of the 25 Year Plan Working Group to the Nature and Wellbeing Strategy Group

The Nature and Wellbeing Strategy Group is a new Link group, and an evolution of the 25 Year Plan Working Group. The importance of the natural environment to people's health and wellbeing has shot up the public and political agenda as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic. The new group stems from the recognition that members' priorities and expertise stretch beyond purely the implementation of the 25 Year Plan – although that will still form a core part of the group's work. The group developed [proposals](#) for how the Government should deliver its promise to protect 30% of land by 2030. This group will seek to use its collective expertise and influence in 2021 to affect tangible policy changes that will benefit people and nature.

Providing a pollution solution

The Link Resources and Waste Group made two key interventions in 2020 – [responding](#) to HM Treasury's Plastic Packaging Tax consultation, including a follow up meeting with the Treasury policy team, and providing extensive [evidence](#) on packaging to the Competition Markets Authority inquiry into misleading environmental claims. Such misleading packaging claims are becoming more common, as unscrupulous companies seek to appeal to an increasingly environmentally aware public by overblown sustainability claims. The Resources Group took further action against this trend in autumn 2020 by publicly [calling out](#) a new BSI standard for biodegradable plastics, that is likely to make pollution worse, despite claims to the contrary. The Group provided briefings to underpin Environment Bill advocacy work with Greener UK and look forward to continuing this work in 2021. Landmark consultations on Deposit Return Schemes (DRS) and Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) proposals in the Environment Bill are due in Spring 2021 and the Group will be responding in full.

Tackling wildlife crime

The Group published their fourth Annual Wildlife Crime [Report](#) (with 2019 figures) in November 2020, through a parliamentary roundtable chaired by Baroness Bennett. The Report presented new evidence to support long-standing calls from the Group to make wildlife crimes notifiable and included a new section on cyber-crime, a growing source of criminal activity. Progress on a further group priority was achieved through agreement of another year's funding for the National Wildlife Crime Unit, following sustained Link representations. In 2021 the Group will continue to push for wildlife crimes to be made notifiable, and action to be taken to address the growing concern areas of cyber-crime, hare-coursing and raptor persecution.

Tackling hazardous chemicals

A new workstream on tackling chemicals has opened up for Link. In 2020, Link scoped the usefulness of a group set up specifically to look at chemicals, from regulation and authorisation to use, pollution and waste. After this initial phase, it was decided that it would be a useful area of work for the sector. The group will look at the upcoming Government's Chemicals Strategy, as well as the governance gaps that exist now that the UK is no longer inside the EU, such as REACH. This year will be about prioritising environmental considerations in chemicals regulation and management, and breaking down the silos between industrial and agricultural chemicals.

A green (and blue) recovery

In 2020, Link lobbied for a National Nature Service in green jobs to help address the job crisis. 2021 will build on this, by looking at projects and opportunities for Government investment and policy during the economic recovery from the COVID-19 crisis. Partnering with Green Alliance, Link have been working on a project which aims to influence Treasury and No. 10 in their thinking and their spending. In particular, Link are looking at the value of nature-based solutions, habitat creation and other natural assets to make the economic case for them. This year, we are working on welcoming the Dasgupta Review, the Comprehensive Spending Review and

Trustees' Report (continued)

how to use opportunities such as COP26, CBD COP15 and the G7 summit to advocate for finance that protects and enhances nature.

Securing a global goal for nature

With the Convention on Biological Diversity COP15 in taking place in Kunming later this year, 2020 saw the start of a new project involving all four UK Environment Link organisations with the aim to create alignment across all four administrations on the UK's objectives for the talks. Over the next year, the group will be working together to develop our recommendations on how the four Governments of the UK can develop a strong negotiating position capable of influencing the success of the post-2020 biodiversity framework. We'll be calling for legally-binding targets for the recovery of species and habitats by 2030, proper delivery of the UK's 30x30 target, a robust monitoring, reporting, and verification framework, and commitment to 4-country coordination on nature's protection. It will be impossible to solve the biodiversity crisis without tackling the climate crisis and vice versa, and so we are also committed to highlighting the need for the protection and restoration of nature to be a key consideration in negotiations at the climate summit COP26 in Glasgow in November.

Structure, Governance and Management

Leadership

2020 saw the appointment of the Chair of Trustees, Martin Spray CBE, and of the Treasurer, Philip Hewetson, as well as the reappointment of Ordinary Trustee Nicola Hutchinson (Plantlife).

Link's Board of Trustees, and its Finance and Resources Sub Committee, each held four meetings during 2020.

The organisation is a charitable company limited by guarantee, incorporated on 7 December 1999 and registered as a charity on 5 January 2005. Members of the Board of Trustees are Directors for the purpose of Company Law and Trustees for the purpose of Charity Law. Members who served during the year, and up to the date of this report, are set out on Page 3.

The company was established under a Memorandum of Association which established the objects and powers of the charitable company and is governed under its Articles of Association. In 2007 the Memorandum and Articles of Association were reviewed, both to ensure compliance with the Companies Act (2006) and Charities Act (2006). Recognising the need to update the Articles, a further review was carried out in 2017/18 and the updated Articles were agreed upon by members at a special General Meeting on 22 May 2020.

Under the Articles, the members of the Board of Trustees are elected by a postal vote in advance or by secret ballot at the Annual General Meeting. Members of the Board of Trustees must retire at the third Annual General Meeting after that at which he or she was first elected, and is eligible for re-election for a further term ending on the sixth Annual General Meeting after their first election. The Treasurer must retire at the Annual General Meeting every three years but may stand for re-election with no maximum term of office.

Risk Management

Wildlife and Countryside Link views the management of risk as an integral element of its governance processes. The major risks to which the charity is exposed, as identified by Link's Director and Trustees, are reviewed annually with systems in place to mitigate those risks. It is recognised that any control system can only provide reasonable, but not absolute, assurance that major risks have been managed adequately.

The two main risks and uncertainties that face the charity, as identified in the Risk Register, include risks to income and reputation. Link aims to mitigate these risks by scrutinising the finances through the Finance and Resources Sub-Committee, by diversifying our funding sources, horizon scanning with members, non-members and other stakeholders, and regularly communicating with our member organisations to ensure they are updated, engaged and benefitting from their membership of Link.

Trustees' Report (continued)

The Link team adheres to protocols and procedures, with the finances being closely monitored to ensure expenditure is appropriate and within reasonable limits, and that adequate resources are in place. Link's Communications Manager also works with our Director and Trustees to reduce potential risks to Link's reputation.

Wildlife and Countryside Link has a health and safety policy to provide adequate control of the health and safety risks arising from our work activities. Each new joiner given an induction in the most up to date health & safety policy.

Pay Policy for senior staff

The Trustees consider that the Board of Trustees and the senior management team comprise the key management personnel of the charity in charge of directing and controlling, running and operating the Charity on a day-to-day basis. Day-to-day operational responsibility is delegated from Trustees to the CEO and senior team. All Trustees give of their time freely and no Trustee received remuneration in the year. Details of Trustees' expenses and related party transactions are disclosed in Note 6 to the accounts.

We have reviewed the pay and rewards given to staff to ensure we give fair terms in line with other similar organisations.

Preparation of the report

This report has been prepared taking advantage of the small companies' exemption of section 415A of the Companies Act 2006.

Exemptions from Disclosure

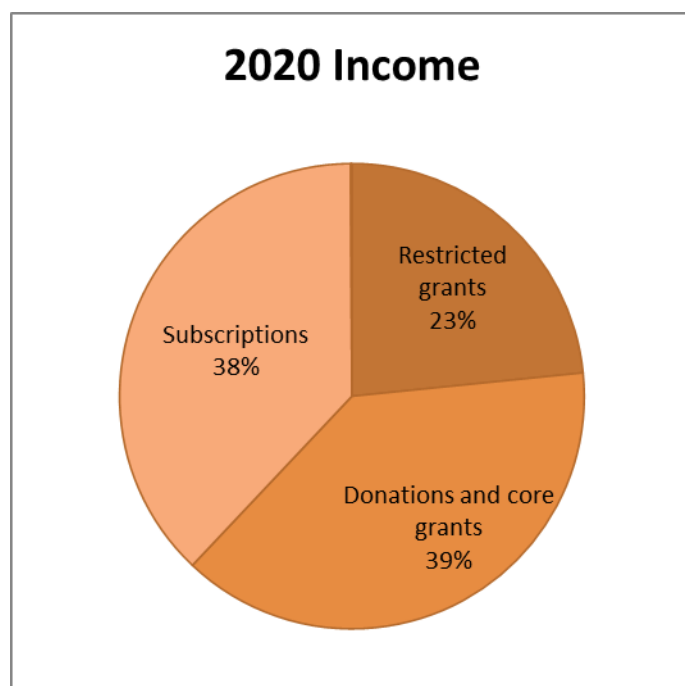
There are no exemptions required.

Funds held as custodian Trustee on behalf of others

Link does not have a custodian Trustee.

Financial Review

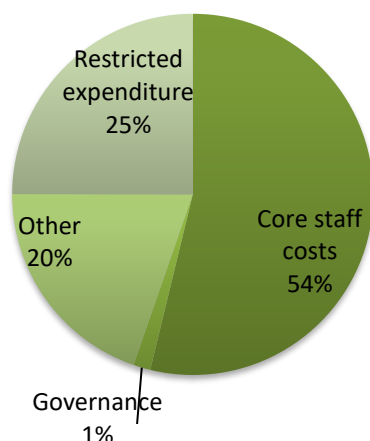
Here we summarise financial information to give an overview of the charity's financial performance during 2020, by using selected information from the full annual accounts. The full accounts are set out at page 14 and thereafter.



During 2020, a number of restricted grants contributed towards funding the ongoing implementation of Link's five year Strategy 2020-25. Link's total income in 2020 was £483,159 (2019 £419,836). Member subscriptions for the year totalled £182,957 (2019 £167,028).

Trustees' Report (continued)

2020 Expenditure



Link's total expenditure amounted to £344,242 (2019 £334,152).

Total expenditure on staff costs are shown in note 5, which totalled £255,567. As in past years, this does not take account of the contribution made to Link's collaborative work by staff within our member organisations, who help us to achieve so much. These results show that Link has, and continues to, develop a secure financial model based on member subscriptions with a level of grants that allow Link to maximise its effectiveness for its members.

Reserves Policy

Link's Reserve policy is to maintain free reserves of six months operating expenditure, over a rolling period of three years. This allows Link's Board of Trustees to maximise the use of the financial reserves but demands a plan to achieve the policy. At 31 December 2020, free reserves (in the general fund) amounted to 10.3 months of total 2020 expenditure. This level of reserves will allow Link to continue to implement the current interim Strategy.

Grants

Link secured valuable grant funding in 2020 to support its work with members. Link's application for another Esme Fairbairn Foundation grant was accepted in 2018 and Link will receive this unrestricted grant in annual instalments over the next three years. This income helped to support the salary costs in 2020 of the Head of Policy & Advocacy, Head of Communications and the CEO.

Link's Marine Policy and Campaigns Manager role continued to be funded in 2020 by the John Ellerman Foundation, which awarded Link a three-year grant in 2017.

The other two posts at Link - Information and Policy Coordinator and Policy Officer - continued to be funded through unrestricted core income, largely from member subscriptions. WWF-UK also provides grant support for Link's core policy work that helps the organisation deliver its own objectives on areas such as illegal wildlife trade, the freshwater environment, agriculture, and marine and whales.

The four Links of Environment Links UK (Wildlife and Countryside Link, Wales Environment Link, Scottish Environment LINK and Northern Ireland Environment Link) also benefit from a WWF-UK grant, which supports their collaborative work across the UK.

Trustees' Report (continued)

Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic

In addition to the risks that the Trustees have identified and considered, the Trustees have given due consideration for the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic upon the charity's current and future activities. There will be a no negative financial impact in the short-term due to access to emergency funding from Esmeé Fairbairn Foundation and the other successful grant applications. There is a manageable medium term risk of some effects on membership and Link is keeping some additional reserves to cover that eventuality.

The charity has put in a range of steps in line with available guidance from HM Government to mitigate this threat to the charity. We have reviewed our budgets and forecasts for a period of at least one year from the date of approval of the financial statements. The Trustees have concluded that there is a reasonable expectation that the Charity has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. The Charity therefore continues to adopt the going concern basis in preparing its financial statements.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all of those individuals and organisations that made 2020 such a great year for Link, including our members, partners, funders and colleagues. With their generous support, we will continue to work hard in 2021 and beyond to conserve and protect wildlife and the countryside.

Preparation of the report

This report has been prepared taking advantage of the small companies' exemption of section 415A of the Companies Act 2006. It was approved, and authorised for issue, by the Trustees on 24 May 2021 and signed on its behalf by:



Martin Spray CBE, Chair of Wildlife & Countryside Link

Independent Examiners Report to the Members of Wildlife and Countryside Link

I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the accounts of the Company for the year ended 31 December 2020 as set out on pages 14 to 24.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity's trustees of the Company (who are also the directors of the company for the purposes of company law), you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 ("the 2006 Act").

Having satisfied myself that the accounts of the Company are not required to be audited for this year under Part 16 of the 2006 Act and are eligible for independent examination, I report in respect of my examination of your charity's accounts as carried out under section 145 of the Charities Act 2011 ("the 2011 Act"). In carrying out my examination, I have followed the Directions given by the Charity Commission (under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act).

This report is made solely to the charity's trustees, as a body. My work has been undertaken so that I might state to the charity's trustees those matters which I am required to state to them in an independent examiners report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, I do not accept or assume responsibility to any party other than the charity and charity's trustees as a body, for my examination, for this report, or for the statement I have given below.

Independent examiner's statement

The charity's gross income exceeded £250,000 and I am qualified to undertake the examination by being a qualified member of The Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales.

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention which gives me cause to believe that:

- accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 386 of the Companies Act 2006; or
- the accounts do not accord with such records; or
- the accounts do not comply with relevant accounting requirements under section 396 of the Companies Act 2006 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair' view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination; or
- the accounts have not been prepared in accordance with the Charities SORP (FRS102).

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



JOHN SPEED FCA FCIE
JS2 Limited
One Crown Square
Woking
Surrey
GU21 6HR

Date: 7 June 2021

Statement of Financial Activities**For the year ended 31 December 2020****(Incorporating the Income and Expenditure Account)**

	Notes	Unrestricted Funds 2020 £	Restricted Funds 2020 £	Total Funds 2020 £	Total Funds 2019 £
INCOME FROM					
Donations and legacies	2	186,733	-	186,733	130,455
Income from Charitable activities:					
Grants for project work	10	-	113,050	113,050	121,107
Subscriptions		182,957	-	182,957	167,028
Other trading activities:					
Income from investments		419	-	419	1,246
TOTAL INCOME		370,109	113,050	483,159	419,836
EXPENDITURE ON					
Raising funds		-	-	-	970
Expenditure on Charitable activities	3	258,277	85,965	344,242	333,182
TOTAL EXPENDITURE		258,277	85,965	344,242	334,152
Net Income		111,832	27,085	138,917	85,684
Transfers between funds	10	-	-	-	-
NET MOVEMENT IN FUNDS		111,832	27,085	138,917	85,684
TOTAL FUNDS BROUGHT FORWARD		184,076	54,771	238,847	153,163
TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD		£ 295,908	£ 81,856	£ 377,764	£ 238,847

Registered Company number 03889519

Balance Sheet**As at 31 December 2020**

	Notes	£	2020 £	£	2019 £
FIXED ASSETS					
Tangible assets	7		9,509		4,956
CURRENT ASSETS					
Debtors	8	41,703		14,394	
Cash at bank and in hand		400,206		232,792	
		<u>441,909</u>		<u>247,186</u>	
CREDITORS: amounts falling due within one year	9	(73,654)		(13,295)	
NET CURRENT ASSETS			<u>368,255</u>		<u>233,891</u>
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES			<u>377,764</u>		<u>238,847</u>
NET ASSETS			<u>£ 377,764</u>		<u>£ 238,847</u>
FUNDS					
Restricted funds			81,856		54,771
General fund (unrestricted)			295,908		184,076
			<u>£ 377,764</u>		<u>£ 238,847</u>

For the year ending 31 December 2020 the Company was entitled to exemption from audit under section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies.

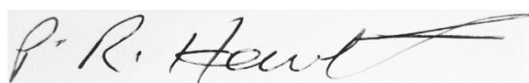
The members have not required the company to obtain an audit of its accounts for the year in question in accordance with section 476.

The directors acknowledge their responsibility for complying with the requirements of the Act with respect to accounting records and for the preparation of accounts.

These accounts have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies subject to the small companies' regime. They were approved and authorised for issue by the directors on 24 May 2021 and signed on their behalf by:-



Martin Spray, Chair



Philip Hewetson, Treasurer

Statement of Cash Flows**As at 31 December 2020**

	£	2020 £	£	2019 £
CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES:				
Net income for the year	138,917		85,684	
Adjustments for:				
Depreciation charges	4,922		3,035	
Interest	(419)		(1,246)	
(Increase) in debtors	(27,309)		(6,025)	
Increase/ (decrease) in creditors	60,359		(10,966)	
NET CASH PROVIDED BY OPERATING ACTIVITIES:		176,470		70,482
CASH FLOWS FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES:				
Interest	419		1,246	
Purchase of tangible fixed assets	(9,475)		(3,844)	
NET CASH (USED IN) INVESTING ACTIVITIES:		(9,056)		(2,598)
Change in cash and cash equivalents in the year		167,414		67,884
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year		232,792		164,908
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year	£	400,206	£	232,792

Notes to the Financial Statements

For the year ended 31 December 2020

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

Basis of preparation of financial statements

These financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention and in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102). The Charity is a public benefit entity for the purposes of FRS 102 and therefore has also prepared the financial statements in accordance with the Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (The FRS 102 Charities SORP) and the Charities Act 2011.

Going Concern

In addition to the risks that the Trustees have identified and considered, the Trustees have given due consideration for the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic upon the charity's current and future activities. There will be a no negative financial impact in the short-term due to access to emergency funding from Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and the other successful grant applications. There is a manageable medium term risk of some effects on membership and Link is keeping some additional reserves to cover that eventuality.

The charity has put in a range of steps in line with available guidance from HM Government to mitigate this threat to the charity. We have reviewed our budgets and forecasts for a period of at least one year from the date of approval of the financial statements. The Trustees have concluded that there is a reasonable expectation that the Charity has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. The Charity therefore continues to adopt the going concern basis in preparing its financial statements.

Company status

The Charity is a company limited by guarantee. In the event of the Charity being wound up, the liability in respect of the guarantee is limited to £1 per member of the Charity.

Fund accounting

General funds are unrestricted funds which are available for use at the discretion of the Trustees in furtherance of the general objectives of the Charity and which have not been designated for other purposes.

Restricted funds are funds which are to be used in accordance with specific restrictions imposed by donors or which have been raised by the Charity for particular purposes. The costs of raising such funds are charged against the specific fund. The aim and use of each restricted fund is set out in the notes to the financial statements.

Income

All income is included in the Statement of financial activities when the Charity has entitlement to the funds, certainty of receipt and the amount can be measured with sufficient reliability.

Subscription income from full and associate member organisations is invoiced on a calendar year basis and is recognised accordingly.

Grants are recognised as income in the Statement of financial activities in accordance with the terms attached by the grantor.

Income from recharged costs is accrued when the associated costs are incurred. Other donations and sundry income are recognised in the Statement of financial activities when received.

Notes to the Financial Statements (continued)

Expenditure

Expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis and has been included under expense categories that aggregate all costs for allocation to activities. Where costs cannot be directly attributed to particular activities they have been allocated on a basis consistent with the use of the resources.

Governance costs are those incurred in connection with compliance with constitutional and statutory requirements.

Tangible fixed assets and depreciation

All assets costing more than £1,000 are capitalised.

Tangible fixed assets are stated at cost less depreciation. Depreciation is provided at rates calculated to write off the cost of fixed assets, less their estimated residual value, over their expected useful lives on the following bases:

Fixtures and fittings -	4 years
Office equipment -	4 years
IT equipment -	4 years

Operating leases

Rentals under operating leases are charged to the Statement of financial activities on a straight line basis over the lease term.

2. DONATIONS AND LEGACIES

	Unrestricted Funds 2020 £	Restricted Funds 2020 £	Total Funds 2020 £	Total Funds 2019 £
Donations	1,950	-	1,950	2,371
Government grant: Furlough scheme	3,907	-	3,907	-
Grants for core funding	180,876	-	180,876	128,084
	£ 186,733	£ Nil	£ 186,733	£ 130,455

In 2019 all voluntary income was unrestricted.

Notes to the Financial Statements (continued)**3. CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES:
FACILITATION, COORDINATION & INFORMATION PROVISION****CURRENT YEAR**

	Unrestricted Funds 2020 £	Restricted Funds 2020 £	Total Funds 2020 £	Total Funds 2019 £
Staff costs	185,162	70,405	255,567	211,691
Support costs (see Note 4)	5,302	-	5,302	2,860
Other costs	67,813	15,560	83,373	118,631
	£ 258,277	£ 85,965	£ 344,242	£ 333,182

PRIOR YEAR

	<i>Unrestricted Funds 2019 £</i>	<i>Restricted Funds 2019 £</i>	<i>Total Funds 2019 £</i>
Staff costs	148,831	62,860	211,691
Support costs (see Note 4)	2,860	-	2,860
Other costs	73,356	45,275	118,631
	£ 225,047	£ 108,135	£ 333,182

Expenditure includes:

	2020 £	2019 £
Rent	28,097	26,894

4. SUPPORT COSTS

	Unrestricted Funds 2020 £	Restricted Funds 2020 £	Total Funds 2020 £	Total Funds 2019 £
GOVERNANCE:				
Independent Examiner:				
Preparation of Statutory Accounts	1,560	-	1,560	1,440
Independent Examination	1,260	-	1,260	1,200
Trustee away day	-	-	-	204
Legal and professional fees	2,400	-	2,400	-
Other expenses	82	-	82	16
	£ 5,302	£ Nil	£ 5,302	£ 2,860

In 2019 all support costs were unrestricted.

Notes to the Financial Statements (continued)**5. STAFF NUMBERS AND COSTS**

	2020	2019
	£	£
Wages and salaries	224,347	185,192
Social security costs	18,925	15,248
Pension costs	12,295	11,251
	£ 255,567	£ 211,691
	Number	Number
The average headcount during the year was as follows:	6.3	5.8

One employee received remuneration of between £60,000 and £70,000 in the year (exclusive of employer pensions and employer National Insurance contributions). (2019: No employees were paid £60,000 or more). The employer pension contributions for that member of staff amounted to £3,600 in the year.

The key management personnel of the Charity comprise all staff members. The total employee benefits of the key management personnel of the Charity were as disclosed above.

6. RELATED PARTY DISCLOSURES

During the year, no trustee received any remuneration (2019: Nil). There were no trustees' expenses reimbursed in the year (2019: £nil).

Due to the nature of the Charity's work, its Trustees are often Trustees or employees of member organisations. Member subscriptions for these organisations are always calculated on the same basis as for other members.

7. TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

	Fixtures and fittings £	Office equipment £	IT equipment £	Total £
Cost				
At start of year 2019	3,017	31,534	-	34,551
Additions	6,000	1,315	2,160	9,475
At 31 December 2020	9,017	32,849	2,160	44,026
Depreciation				
At start of year 2019	3,017	26,578	-	29,595
Charge for the year	1,197	3,302	423	4,922
At 31 December 2020	4,214	29,880	423	34,517
Net book value				
At 31 December 2019	-	4,956	-	4,956
At 31 December 2020	4,803	2,969	1,737	9,509

Notes to the Financial Statements (continued)**8. DEBTORS**

	2020	2019
	£	£
Prepayments	2,816	6,520
Trade debtors	31,379	6,064
Other debtors	7,508	1,810
	<u>£ 41,703</u>	<u>£ 14,394</u>

9. CREDITORS: AMOUNTS FALLING DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR

	2020	2019
	£	£
Accruals	7,959	4,615
Deferred income (see below)	55,755	1,705
Trade creditors	2,494	2,075
Taxation and social security	6,151	4,900
Pensions	1,295	-
	<u>£ 73,654</u>	<u>£ 13,295</u>

Deferred income:		
Balance brought forward	13,295	10,988
Amount released to income	(13,295)	(10,988)
Amount deferred in the year (grants and subscriptions for the following year)	55,755	1,705
	<u>£ 55,755</u>	<u>£ 13,295</u>

10. STATEMENT OF FUNDS - CURRENT YEAR

	Brought Forward 1 January 2020 £	Income £	Expenditure £	Transfers £	Carried Forward 31 December 2020 £
RESTRICTED FUNDS					
I Environment Links UK	3,754	-	(529)	-	3,225
II Agriculture	885	1,050	(756)	-	1,179
III Marine Projects	12,813	36,000	(25,981)	-	22,832
IV Blueprint for Water	5,475	-	(5,475)	-	-
V Planning Coalition	289	-	-	-	289
VI Head of Communications	31,155	37,500	(37,623)	-	31,032
VII Wildlife Crime and Trade	400	-	-	-	400
VII Convention on Biological Diversity	-	15,000	(6,801)	-	8,199
VIII Environmental Fundraising Network	-	23,500	(8,800)	-	14,700
	<u>54,771</u>	<u>113,050</u>	<u>(85,965)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>81,856</u>
GENERAL FUND	184,076	370,109	(258,277)	-	295,908
TOTAL FUNDS	<u>£ 238,847</u>	<u>£ 483,159</u>	<u>£ (344,242)</u>	<u>£ Nil</u>	<u>£ 377,764</u>

Notes to the Financial Statements (continued)

10. STATEMENT OF FUNDS - CURRENT YEAR (CONTINUED)

Purposes of restricted funds:

I **Environment Links UK**

The WWF-UK Environment Links UK (ELUK) project grant supports the four Link organisations in the UK (Wildlife and Countryside Link, Wales Environment Link, Scottish Environment LINK and Northern Ireland Environment Link) in updating each other and collaborating on work programmes, key priorities, and operational matters, through meetings, email communications and conference calls. Expenditure from this fund in 2020 was spent on costs to NIEL for the Environment Links chair meeting in Birmingham.

II **Agriculture**

This project relates to the activities of Link's Agriculture Working Group. Income from donations for polling at Oxford Farming Conference, expenditure on polling and travel related to the same conference.

III **Marine Projects**

Money within this restricted fund relates to costs of employing the Marine Policy & Campaigns Manager. Income was from the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.

IV **Blueprint for Water**

The Blueprint for Water project was set up in 2009 to fund the publication and distribution of the Blueprint coalition's third report. This project relates to the activities of Link's Blueprint working group. No income in this fund in 2020. Expenditure in 2020 was for AECOM for the Naturally Resilient project, and to Ruddocks to design a briefing.

V **Planning Coalition**

The Planning Coalition fund was set up in 2010 to cover costs associated with the publication and distribution of the new Greenest Planning Ever Coalition's 'Vision for the Future of Planning' report. No funds have been spent since 2014 and £289 has been carried forward into 2021.

VI **Head of Communications**

Money within this restricted fund relates to costs of employing Link's Head of Communications. Income was from the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.

VII **Wildlife Crime and Trade**

This project relates to the activities of Link's Wildlife Crime Working Group. There were no transactions in this fund in 2020.

VII **Convention on Biological Diversity**

This project relates to the activities of Link's CBD Policy Officer coordinating with other Links to collaborate on UK-wide response to upcoming COP15 and COP26. Income in 2020 from a restricted grant for this work from Esmée Fairbairn Foundation. Expenditure on the CBD Policy Officer's salary, NI costs and pension costs.

VIII **Environmental Funders Network**

This project relates to the activities of Link's work on the National Nature Service. Income from restricted grants from a variety of funders from the 'Environmental Funders Network', expenditure on design and communications related to the NNS.

Notes to the Financial Statements (continued)

11. STATEMENT OF FUNDS - PRIOR YEAR

	<i>Brought Forward</i>				<i>Carried Forward</i>
	<i>1 January</i>	<i>Income</i>	<i>Expenditure</i>	<i>Transfers</i>	<i>31 December</i>
	<i>2019</i>				<i>2019</i>
	<i>£</i>	<i>£</i>	<i>£</i>	<i>£</i>	<i>£</i>
RESTRICTED FUNDS					
I <i>Environment Links UK</i>	-	5,000	(1,246)	-	3,754
II <i>Agriculture</i>	8,301	2,227	(9,643)	-	885
III <i>Marine Projects</i>	7,281	40,000	(34,468)	-	12,813
IV <i>Blueprint for Water</i>	2,565	28,000	(25,090)	-	5,475
V <i>Planning Coalition</i>	289	-	-	-	289
VI <i>Head of Communications</i>	22,047	37,500	(28,392)	-	31,155
VII <i>Wildlife Crime and Trade</i>	1,316	-	(916)	-	400
VIII <i>Animal Welfare</i>	-	8,380	(8,380)	-	-
	<u>41,799</u>	<u>121,107</u>	<u>(108,135)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>54,771</u>
	41,799	121,107	(108,135)	-	54,771
 <i>GENERAL FUND</i>	 111,364	 298,729	 (226,017)	 -	 184,076
 <i>TOTAL FUNDS</i>	 <u>153,163</u>	 <u>419,836</u>	 <u>(334,152)</u>	 <u>-</u>	 <u>238,847</u>

12. ANALYSIS OF NET ASSETS BETWEEN FUNDS

Current Year	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds £
Tangible fixed assets	9,509	-	9,509
Net current assets	286,399	81,856	368,255
	<u>£ 295,908</u>	<u>£ 81,856</u>	<u>£ 377,764</u>
 <i>Prior Year</i>	 <i>Unrestricted Funds £</i>	 <i>Restricted Funds £</i>	 <i>Total Funds £</i>
Tangible fixed assets	4,956	-	4,956
Net current assets	179,120	54,771	233,891
	<u>£ 184,076</u>	<u>£ 54,771</u>	<u>£ 238,847</u>

Notes to the Financial Statements (continued)**13. OPERATING LEASE COMMITMENTS**

At the year end the Charity had total commitments under the non-cancellable operating lease on its premises repayable as follows:

	2020	2019
	£	£
Operating leases which expire:		
within one year	29,431	4,691
within two to five years	7,447	-
	<u>£ 36,878</u>	<u>£ 4,691</u>