



WildCookham CIO Annual Report 2024

2024 saw the tenth anniversary of the formation of Cookham Wildlife Supporters, WildCookham's original name. We were able to look back on ten years of development and achievement. From a small band of local people concerned about the future of our wildlife we have become an important part of the local community as well as enjoying more than 1000 supporters following our activities with many participating in our work and activities.

During the year, Lynne Pepperell's public events team oversaw 21 activities, including walks around Cookham and talks on wildlife matters, including a visit by the CEO of the Freshwater Habitats Trust. Our work on the reserves and other land in Cookham continued – on the Harris Woodbridge Reserve (for which Caroline Collins took responsibility after several years of excellent leadership by Mike Day); on the local Commons as part of our *Wilding the Commons* project led by John Southgate and in partnership with the National Trust; on the Marsh Meadow pond which WildCookham manages (with Malcolm Stork in charge) for the Marsh Meadow Management Committee and the owners of the field, Copas Partnership.

We stepped up our work with our Water Vole recovery project, with Marianne Young's well-organised team monitoring activity year round, partnering with BBOWT (Berks and Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust) and with an increased focus on American Mink eradication. This now links to a nationwide effort led by Natural England to remove this introduced species.

The Wildlife Gardens Awards enjoyed its seventh year. Since its initial trial in Cookham, this scheme to encourage local residents to do their bit for nature in their own gardens has now been adopted across the Royal Borough through our fellow Wild groups and with the support of the RBWM Council. A new initiative for the 2024 Awards was Cookham's Big Wildlife Weekend. A team led by Brian Clews organised this event, which included packing and donating packets of seeds for every Primary School child in Cookham. Residents were encouraged to survey all the wildlife in their garden over the weekend.

The year also saw an increase in our focus on the larger local landowners in and around Cookham. The survey work funded by South East Water of the combined landholdings of several riparian landowners started in the Spring and was ongoing during the year. Even more encouraging has been the number of landowners with smaller pockets of land seeking advice on improving the biodiversity of the land. We now have a sizeable group of these which will allow us to explore shared initiatives across Cookham.

The work with South East Water reflects an intention to devote more effort to the waterways of Cookham. The Water Voles project took us into this area but we intend to step up the efforts. An early result of this increased focus is the receipt of a grant of £1600 to undertake water quality analysis in some of our waterways and ponds. We look forward to building on this promising start.

Our work with Cookham Parish Council is just one component of this community wide work. During the year we have been working to extend the work on the Harris Woodbridge Reserve to encompass the adjacent field.

We continued to work with the other Wilds groups in the Borough and also with the Borough Council on implementation of the Biodiversity Action Plan (itself the result of such cooperation). This partnership now extends to the Berkshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy, for which the Royal Borough has the lead role, and which we hope will make a significant contribution to saving and restoring natural habitats across the county. At a parish level Lars Ahlgren has continued to serve on the Cookham Neighbourhood Plan Working Group; the results of this will be put for final public consultation in 2025.

So we have maintained our momentum through this anniversary years with exciting opportunities ahead as we look more strategically at the challenges facing our natural environment and the appropriate responses for a local community group.

This broadening of our range of activities, and the people and other resources it calls for, presents the challenges inevitable with any drive for change. To help with this we are looking to further strengthen our board of trustees and are delighted that, from 1st January 2025, we welcomed two new trustees – Caroline Collins, one of our committee members who has been a key player in extending our work with the parish council, and Jacqui Edwards, the chair of Cookham Parish Council Planning Committee and, for several years the lead for WildCookham's Glow Worm survey team. At the same time we bid farewell to Lynne Pepperell, one of the founding members of Cookham Wildlife Supporters and a founder trustee of WildCookham. Lynne's concern for our local natural world, her interest in the potential of our local gardens and her organisational skills have been an important part of the group's development during our first ten years. We owe her an immense debt of gratitude.

Our finances remain robust. With no major event such as in the 2023 financial year (the *Our Changing Earth* exhibition), our income was very much lower but, net of that, income was higher in the year with good net receipts from the Wild Weekend and also donations for the Water Vole project. We also received a grant of £1600 from TOE (Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment) for the water analysis project. Outgoings were also much lower than last year. Our balance sheet remains strong, with nearly £5000 of General Funds and just over £8500 in Reserved Funds allocated to particular projects. Our thanks to our Honorary Treasurer Bill Beglow for keeping our finances in good order.

The success of a local group such as ours is only possible with the help of many volunteers who give 'hands on' support to our increasing number of habitat management projects. And behind that our committee, led by Lars Ahlgren, has continued to give its energy, ideas and wisdom to our mission to preserve, protect and enhance all aspects of our natural world in and around Cookham. Our sincere thanks to all of them.

On behalf of the Trustees:

Lars Ahlgren, Caroline Collins, Mike Copland, Jacqui Edwards and Rosie Street

26 February 2025

WILDCOOKHAM STATEMENT OF ACCOUNT

FOR THE YEAR TO
31st December 2023

FOR THE YEAR TO
31st December 2024

	RECEIPTS			RECEIPTS		
	£	£		£	£	
Donations – non specific	578			1,073		Page 2
Camera Hire	0			0		
Fund Raising Activities	814			174		Page 2
		1,392			1,247	
Project Funds Received:						
Wild Weekend	450			627		Page 2
Harris Woodbridge Reserve	225			0		
Seeding Project Donations	0			0		
Water Voles Donations	0			250		
Wild SL6 Donations	-91			0		
Nesting Boxes Donations	91			0		
Our Changing Earth Grant/Sales	7,007			0		
Cookham Waterways Project	0			1,600		
		7,682			2,477	
TOTAL FUNDS RECEIVED	£	9,074		£	3,724	
	EXPENDITURE					
Cost of fund raising	432			20		
Admin cost	702			840		Page 2
Charitable donations made	91			0		
Potential Project Costs	816			0		
		2,041			860	
Harris Woodbridge Reserve	25			25		
Seeding Project	294			331		
Water Voles	539			651		
Wild SL6	91			0		
Nesting Boxes	-91			0		
Our Changing Earth	14,618			0		
Wild Weekend	390			602		
Cookham Waterways Project	0			1,644		
		15,866			3,253	
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	£	17,907		£	4,113	
CLOSING BANK BALANCE	£	13,739 at Bank		£	13,426	
	£	76 in Hand			(Opening 01/01.2024 was £13,815)	
	£	13,815				
		(Opening 01/01/23 was £22,648)				
FUND RESERVES AVAILABLE	£					
General Fund - at Bank	4359			4,778		
General Fund - cash in hand	76	4435		0	4,778	
Harris Woodbridge Reserve		730			705	
Seeding Project		205			-127	Page 2
Water Voles		1,447			1,047	
Wild SL6		2,011			2,011	
Nesting Boxes		0			0	
Our Changing Earth		4,927			4,927	
Wild Weekend		60			85	
Cookham Waterways Project		0			0	Page 2
TOTAL	£	13,815	TOTAL	£	13,426	

**WILDCOOKHAM STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS NOTES
YEAR TO 31st DECEMBER 2024**

Donations - non specific

SumUp	20
Just Giving	200
CD Fete/Festival	152
Walks/Talks	401
B Clews - Activities	300
Total	<u>1073</u>

Fund Raising Activities **174** This is just for Raffles at present

Wild Weekend Donations

B Clews	50
Kings Hall	577
Total	<u>627</u>

Water Voles Project

Donation - Kings Hall	<u>250</u>
-----------------------	-------------------

Admin Cost

Wix Domain	172
Thank you Gifts	83 Mike Day/Geof Elton
Meeting rooms	255
Magazine R&A	91
Insurance	210
Posters	29
Total	<u>840</u>

Seeding Project **-127** Deficit needs funding

Waterways Project

There was an overspend of £44.41 which was written off to General Reserves. However, an extra free test was negotiated so represents good value. These tests are to establish the presence of Great Crested Newts and will be conducted in the Spring.

Harris Woodbridge Reserve

No contribution to the upkeep of this site has been received from the Parish Council this year. This may be due to the mix up with the Licence Fee being reallocated from an erroneous payment re Stonehouse Common. This should be pursued as although the balance appears quite high if trees were to suffer storm damage the need for a Tree Surgeon will dramatically reduce this reserve.