



WildCookham CIO Annual Report 2025

Saving our natural world today is ever more challenging, with pressures from human development on the increase and the pressure to reduce protection also gaining momentum. This is the context for organisations like WildCookham, making our work so important for all of our futures. But it also offers opportunities for communities to come together to save what we can and to give hope to the many flora and fauna who share local habitats with us.

The past year has seen us grasping these opportunities with plans and activities to protect and enhance an increasing number of locations across Cookham, but also putting in place the building blocks for our priorities in the years ahead.

The acid test for our success is the impact we have on preserving local habitats. This means saving and, where relevant, enhancing those that we have as well as engaging with policymakers to prevent or minimise further losses.

Our 'hands-on' work during the year has covered a growing number of projects. We have managed Cookham Parish Council's *Harris Woodbridge Reserve* for several years and our work there now, led by Harry Brar, extends to the adjoining field, where we supported the creation of new hedging and presented plans to create a new pond. These plans have been approved and we intend to have the new pond completed in the current year. We are discussing the creation of a further pond on parish council land, both projects made possible thanks to a grant from CSL, a global pharmaceuticals company with a strong presence in Maidenhead.

Our *Wilding the Commons* project continued under the leadership of John Southgate, with additional areas included on Cookham Moor and Odney Common. We were also delighted to see an increased variety of wild flowers on the Moor, proof that persistence does pay. We continued the management of the *Marsh Meadow pond*, as well as holding pond-dipping sessions there during the year. We also, at the request of the Marsh Meadow management committee, created information boards describing the wildlife on, and history of, the meadow.

Gardens represent around 10 per cent of all the land in our council area so more sustainable garden management can have a significant impact. 2025 was the eighth year of our *Wildlife Gardens Awards* and, for the second year, we included a Wildlife Weekend, organised by Brian Clews. The gardens scheme is being extended across the Royal Borough and we have now recruited additional volunteers to help drive it forward in Cookham.

Our project to bring back *Water Voles* to Cookham remains a flagship project for us, led by Marianne Young with Martin Fisher and Stewart Kay. Now five years since the first releases of voles into our waterways Stewart Kay's survey team was able to point to clear evidence of their spread locally along with mounting evidence of success in the control of the local American Mink population, thanks to the work of Martin Fisher and his extensive monitoring team. Thanks are due to a committed group of volunteers and the project leaders managing this programme.

Turning to our mission to bring new areas of land into a more sustainable management, a new project has been the identification of *Cookham Opportunity Areas*, privately-owned land where the owners are keen to see greater biodiversity. A small team under Brian Clews is working on this with a

view to building a portfolio of these sites. A specific project involves local stables. During the year a project led by local supporter Leysa Henderson engaged with local wildlife trust BBOWT to develop expertise and experience in equiculture. This brings new approaches to stable management aimed at improving biodiversity and equine health as well as cutting costs. An initial project is now under way.

On a *larger landscape scale*, a project involving several neighbouring landowners in Cookham has been further advanced with the help of South East Water. During the year discussions with four of these landowners resulted in specific proposals being prepared for possible SEW funding. We look forward to progressing these in 2026 and hopefully turning them into reality before long.

WildCookham is also increasing its *focus on our waterways and wetlands*, with Malcolm Stork and Lynda Harding leading on this. Aquatic surveys funded by a grant from TOE (the Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment) were completed during the year, with plans for further surveying in 2026. The data we are gathering will provide valuable input to discussions with our landowners.

National and local planning policy is a major influence on our longer term mission. We continued to work with the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead, supporting their Environment and Climate Emergency Strategy and Biodiversity Action Plan, as well as providing input to Berkshire's Local Nature Recovery Strategy. We have also played an important role in the development of the (now approved) Cookham Neighbourhood Plan: thanks to work by Lars Ahlgren this includes reference to designated natural spaces and corridors which must be taken into account in any development plans.

Central to our success is effective *engagement with the local community*. This principally involves public events (walks and talks) and volunteer activity. During the year we held 11 talks on a range of topics and some five walks and other events. These encourage residents to get closer to nature and, in many cases, engage more directly in encouraging sustainable practices in their own lives. In due course we hope that they will also engage in our volunteer activity. This includes the habitat management projects, referred to above, with a mix of 'hands on' work on the sites and the essential survey work to establish the quality of these habitats and measure the impact we have.

We continue to work with our local schools. Pressures on school resources, and especially the demands of the curriculum, can constrain our partnership with them so we are grateful to Joelle Hewson for the work she does to engage with each of our local schools. This is paying off with plans now being developed to involve our primary school children in the discovery of the wonders of our natural world. We hope to see progress on this in 2026.

Keeping our supporters up to date with our activities has also been improved with a now monthly newsletter emailed to some 500 people across Cookham and beyond.

During the latter part of the year we turned our attention to *our longer-term plans*. A strategy review, looking at our priorities and the resources required, has continued into early 2026. Key to this is succession planning, both in our leadership and also for the growing number of projects. We have been fortunate to be joined by several residents with highly relevant skills to take on roles in our public engagement activities: we will have more focus on this in 2026. In November Lars Ahlgren stood down as chair of our Operation Committee, remaining as a trustee with a key role in our landscape management work. Caroline Collins took over the role as chair of our Leadership Team.

Our financial position remains satisfactory. Income for the year at £5492 was up from the previous year by just under £2000, thanks largely to the above-mentioned donation by CSL. Expenditure during the year was slightly lower, at £3323, giving a surplus for the year of £2169 and a closing bank balance of £15,595.

Our thanks go once more to the many volunteers who support WildCookham in so many ways. Recognising the key role they play, and building a team spirit amongst our volunteers, remains a priority for us. And behind that our committee, led for most of the year 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

22 May 2026

WILDCOOKHAM STATEMENT OF ACCOUNT

FOR THE YEAR TO
31st December 2024

FOR THE YE
31st Decemb

	RECEIPTS			RECEIF
	£	£		£
Donations – non specific	1,073			1,486
Camera Hire	0			0
Fund Raising Activities	174			239
		1,247		
Project Funds/ Donations Received:				
Wild Weekend/Wildlife Festival	627			1,075
Harris Woodbridge Reserve	0			0
Seeding Project	0			392
Water Voles	250			0
Wild SL6/Youth & Schools Outreach	0			0
Ponds Project	0			2,000
Cookham Waterways Project	1,600			300
		2,477		
TOTAL FUNDS RECEIVED	£	3,724		£
	EXPENDITURE			EXPENDI
Cost of fund raising	20			127
Admin cost	840			910
Charitable donations made	0			0
Opportunity Areas Project Costs	0			100
		860		
Harris Woodbridge Reserve	25			0
Seeding Project	331			1,027
Water Voles	651			134
Wild SL6/Youth & Schools Outreach	0			34
Wild Weekend/Wildlife Festival	602			991
Cookham Waterways Project	1,644			0
		3,253		
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	£	4,113		£
CLOSING BANK BALANCE	£	13,426		£

Opening Bank 01/01/24 was £13815

FUND RESERVES AVAILABLE

	£
General Fund	4,778
Harris Woodbridge Reserve	705
Seeding Project	-127
Water Voles	1,047
Wild SL6/Youth & School Outreach	2,011
Ponds Project	0
Our Changing Earth	4,927
Wild Weekend/Wildlife Festival	85
Cookham Waterways Project	0
Co-funding Habitat Projects	0
Opportunity Areas expenses fund	0

TOTAL

£ 13,426

TOTAL

£

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er 2025

PTS

£

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1,725

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3,767

5,492

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1,137

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2,186

3,323

15,595

6,392

705

-761 Page 2

912

1,977 Page 2

2,000 Page 2

0 Page 2

170

300 Page 2

3,000 Page 2

900 Page 2

15,595

**WILDCOOKHAM STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS NOTES
YEAR TO 31st DECEMBER 2025**

Donations - non specific

SumUp	1
Just Giving	195
CD Fete/Festival	0
Walks/Talks	895
B Clews - Activities	200
Waltham Place	195
Total	<u>1486</u>

Fund Raising Activities **239** This is just for Raffles at present

Wild Weekend Donations

B Clews & Others	170
D & M Harrold	115
WildMaidenhead	290
Kings Hall	500
Total	<u>1075</u>

Ponds Project

Donation - Seqirus UK Ltd	<u>2000</u>
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Admin Cost

Wix Domain	83
Thank you Gifts	78
Room Hire	520 Meetings & Events
Insurance	229
Total	<u>910</u>

Seeding Project **-761** Deficit needs funding

Cookham Waterways Project

Due to some failed Tests, we have received a credit of £300 which we will utilise in Spring 2026.

Harris Woodbridge Reserve

No contribution to the upkeep of this site has been received from the Parish Council this year, **as was the case last year.**

It should be noted we also have not had a charge for the Licence.

Wild SL6 has now been reallocated for use for Youth & Schools Outreach Projects.

Our Changing Earth Fund has been reallocated to **General Reserve** £927, then £1000 to **Opportunity Areas expenses fund**, the final £3000 to **Co-funding Habitat Projects** which will be on a 30/70 basis.