



Registered Charity No. 1197155

Wildlife Friendly Otley

Annual Report

June 2024 - May 2025



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Foreword

This year the charity decided to reinstate a Chair and Co-Chair to help give us overall direction and leadership. As Co-Chairs of Wildlife Friendly Otley, we are proud to reflect on another year of meaningful progress in our shared mission to make Otley a place where both people and wildlife can thrive. From June 2024 to May 2025, our dedicated volunteers, partners, and supporters have worked together across a wide range of projects — from habitat restoration and public education to campaigning and community engagement. This year has seen strong collaboration, growing awareness, and tangible outcomes for local biodiversity. We extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who has contributed to this collective effort and look forward to building on this momentum in the year ahead.

Neil Griffin and River Six

Co-Chairs

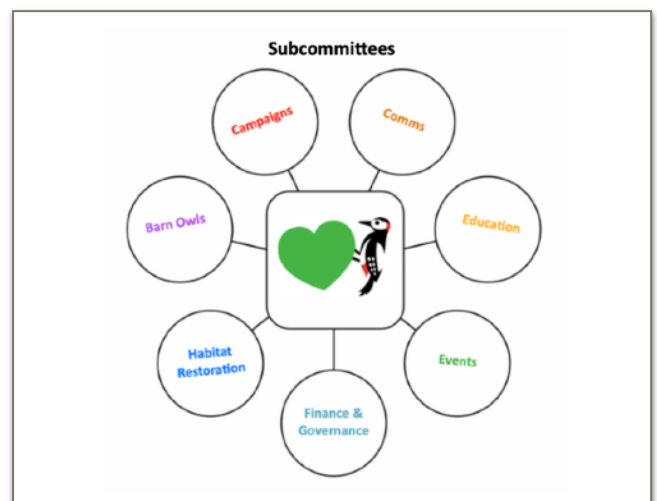
Wildlife Friendly Otley

Our charitable objects are:

- To promote for the benefit of the public the conservation of the wildlife and wildlife habitats and protection and improvement of the physical and natural environment of Otley and the surrounding area.
- To advance the education and appreciation of the public regarding the conservation, protection and improvement of the physical and natural environment.

The work of our charity is divided into seven subcommittees (see figure 1); Campaigns, Communications, Education, Events, Finance & Governance, Habitat Restoration and Barn Owls.

The work of each subcommittee for the past year will be described in the remainder of this report.





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The Trustees

As of May 2025, we have 12 trustees:

Neil Griffin (Co-Chair)	River Six (Co-Chair)
Ben Simpson	Cathy Burton
Claire Blindell	Evie Schofield
Jane Smith	Jim Spencer
Jo Riggall	Mark Trewin
Rob Tindall	Simon Padfield

Our schedule of meeting as trustees is as follows, the green meetings are open to our whole membership to attend;

January	General committee meeting
February	No meeting
March	General committee meeting
April	No meeting
May	Trustee meeting
June	AGM
July	No meeting
August	Trustee meeting
September	No meeting
October	General committee meeting
November	Trustee meeting
December	No meeting

The subcommittees also meet as individual working groups regularly.



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Campaigns

Wildlife Friendly Otley has continued its mission to protect and enhance local biodiversity through a range of impactful community campaigns this year. From crucial habitat restoration projects and vital public education initiatives to comprehensive wildlife surveys and proactive advocacy for nature-friendly policies, our efforts have aimed to inspire and empower residents to take decisive action for the environment.

Following the regrettable loss of a significant oak tree in the centre of Otley this year – the much-loved Tittybottle Oak – the trustees have diligently written and agreed upon a robust Campaigns Strategy. This strategic document now includes a Resilient Emergency Response Plan, specifically designed to guide our immediate and effective reaction to future environmental crises of a similar nature.

An important and ongoing flagship campaign is our Pesticide Free Town initiative. We officially registered Otley last year with the national Pesticide Free Town campaign (<https://www.pan-uk.org/pesticide-free/>). We firmly believe that eliminating pesticide use is a vital component in Otley's journey to becoming a truly wildlife-friendly town, fostering healthier ecosystems for all.



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Communications

This year, Wildlife Friendly Otley has continued to raise awareness and inspire action through engaging, community-focused communications. From dynamic social media campaigns and informative newsletters to widespread local press coverage and impactful public events, we've worked tirelessly to share our core message: that everyone can play a significant part in protecting and celebrating Otley's rich local wildlife. Our communications strategy aims to inform, involve, and ignite a lasting passion for nature across every corner of Otley.

Press releases

We have featured regularly in Otley Matters, ensuring our activities and messages reach a broad local audience.

We have also continued to feature prominently and regularly in the Wharfedale Observer, with key articles including:

- * Our revamped and highly informative 'Where To See Wildlife Leaflet'.
- * Two comprehensive articles about the successful toad patrol: the first detailing the commencement of the patrol and the second celebrating its remarkable success after the season concluded.
- * An article covering our well-attended Spring Social event.
- * Coverage of the Garden Competition Award Presentation, highlighting the achievements of local wildlife-friendly gardeners.
- * Numerous articles surrounding the hugely successful Wildlife Arts Festival 2024, which also garnered significant attention in regional press.
- * An article addressing the poignant loss of the Tittybottle Oak tree, where we clearly articulated our position and appealed for more volunteers to amplify the positive conservation work we undertake as a charity.

Social media

We have been actively promoting a number of our own events, as well as those of closely allied organisations, such as our crucial Toad Patrol, enlightening Wharfedale Naturalists talks, and the engaging Wildsong Collective. Social media has also been instrumental in disseminating important public messages, including government warnings regarding bird flu and the feeding of wild waterfowl. The number of followers on Blue Sky currently stands at 24, which, while small, is



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steadily growing – and we remain committed to consistently sharing valuable content. Spring has proven to be an excellent season to encourage people to share their seasonal wildlife photos, and it has been wonderful to see Trustees contribute their own captivating images. We experienced a recent technical hitch with Facebook, where the Trustee responsible for social media encountered access issues with their personal account; this is being resolved promptly. Looking ahead, we have identified several significant environmental days and events that we plan to feature prominently: International Day of Forests (21 March); The Great British Spring Clean (21 March); and Earth Day (22 April).”

Facebook – 1K+ Instagram – 1060 X – 592 Blue Sky — 24

Newsletters

Helen and River produced three informative newsletters over the last year. These newsletters were distributed directly to all our members, keeping them informed and engaged.

Website

We re-commissioned Rhiannon of Yorkshire Wordwright to undertake a comprehensive revamp of our website. Rob worked closely alongside her to ensure the successful delivery of all the proposed changes. We are pleased to report that the updated and enhanced website is now fully live, offering a more engaging and accessible platform for our visitors.



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Education

Alongside essential Habitat Restoration, Education remains at the very heart of Wildlife Friendly Otley's impactful work. Our focus is on fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of nature among all age groups within our community. Through proactive school partnerships, hands-on workshops, engaging guided walks, and readily accessible learning resources, we've aimed to inspire the next generation of dedicated wildlife champions and equip our community with the essential knowledge to protect and support Otley's rich local biodiversity. Neil has now successfully led captivating wildlife days at least once in all Otley primary schools, in addition to Pool Primary and Yeadon Queensway Primary, significantly expanding our educational reach.

Ashfield Primary School

A team from WFO assisted pupils in planting bulbs and wildflower seeds along the school verge. Unfortunately, this area continues to be routinely mown and overmanaged, resulting in limited survival of the plantings. On another impactful day, we collaborated with Otley2030, school staff, and families to restore the wildlife pond on the school grounds, simultaneously enhancing their overall wildlife space through planting and the creation of other vital habitats. The pond was initially choked with iris, but its dipping platforms remain intact and are anticipated to be used extensively this summer for educational purposes. We are starting to put a team of members together to help with ongoing maintenance of the wildlife area here, as well as similar teams at Pool and the Whartons.

Bramhope Primary School

A new school with whom we haven't previously collaborated, Bramhope Primary contributed some great children's artwork to the Wildlife Arts Festival. Neil is currently planning an exciting wildlife day with their Year One in June, fostering new educational connections.

Pool Primary School

This year, our dedicated team has successfully worked on the wildlife garden area at Pool Primary School. We meticulously renovated a large neglected wildlife pond, transforming it into a vibrant seasonal ephemeral pond (with hundreds of palmate newts!), and constructed a fantastic new raised dipping pond to significantly aid in outdoor education. Our sincere thanks go to all the tireless volunteers who helped, including staff and families, and to the Wharfedale Naturalists Society for generously match funding the cost of the new dipping pond with the PTA.



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Neil also delivered engaging wildlife activities for the children during their dedicated science week, further enriching their learning.

Prince Henry's Grammar School

In the past year, Helen, Neil, and River met with students and staff from Prince Henry's Grammar School. Teachers from the Science, IT, and Geography departments were in attendance, along with the knowledgeable site manager (who demonstrated a strong awareness of wildlife issues). Following this productive meeting, two enthusiastic student members of the Ecommittee, Ben Simpson and Evie Schofield, have stepped forward to become trustees, bringing valuable youth perspectives to our board. Neil also led an informative assembly for Year 7 students, detailing the important work Wildlife Friendly Otley undertakes across the town. This year, Prince Henry's Grammar School kindly adopted WFO as their chosen local charity, a significant recognition of our work.

St Joseph's Primary School

In March, Neil successfully ran comprehensive wildlife days as part of their Science Week, working with the entire school, including the reception class, ensuring broad participation. Diane from Prickly Pigs and Maggie from the West Yorkshire Bat Group brought their respective animals along too.

Westgate Primary School

We have had several fruitful meetings with new Head Chris Short, as a result of which Claire helped run a successful planting session in April. We have decided to use some of the profit from the last wildlife arts festival to help fund planters for the playground.

Whartons Primary School

Neil led an engaging Wildlife Day at the school in September, leading an assembly on general local wildlife themes. He then led one class on an exciting wildlife hunt and another on habitat identification, while Helen and WFO member Edwina Harrison guided children in planting bulbs and wildflower seeds. Once again, Maggie Brown brought in bats for an educational session. In the afternoon, Neil creatively ran educational wildlife games for the younger children, ensuring a fun and informative experience for all.



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Another successful school pond rescue project took place the following Sunday. With the support of the school, we hosted a well-attended working party involving children and their families, including the Headteacher and two teachers. River, Rob, and one dedicated parent efficiently tackled the pond restoration, whilst the rest of the team, led by Neil, worked on a variety of other important tasks, including building bug homes, constructing a mini-beast hotel, and creating numerous log pile and brash habitats, significantly enhancing the school's biodiversity. A few months later Neil and River returned to complete the pond renovation, which will be further enhanced by the new dipping platform the school is purchasing.

Monkey Puzzle Nursery

Another new partnership: Neil took a very young group of wildlife enthusiasts (and staff!) to Grove Hill park for Nature-related fun and games.

Little Green Frog Nursery

And another: We were able to run a session similar to the above in the lovely grounds of Ashfield school.

Cubs & Brownies

With the help of new trustee Ben, and following on from last year's first collaboration, Neil was able to lead a large group of Otley cubs in wildlife related activities on the Chevin.



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Events

Spring 2024 Social

We are committed to offering regular social events for our members to connect with us and with each other about their shared passion for wildlife! Our Spring Social event last spring was exceptionally well attended, with 38 people gathering to listen to Jane and River present on the topic of Wildlife Friendly Gardens, while enjoying delicious cake. Following the event, several members reached out to express their gratitude and to enter their gardens into our first-ever Wildlife Friendly Garden Competition, a fantastic outcome.

Otley Carnival 2024

A sterling effort from all those who staffed our stall and attended in the face of some very discouraging weather! See you all at this year's carnival on 21st June.

Otley Walking Festival 2024

Wildlife Friendly Otley hosted an impressive seven walks during the Otley Walking Festival, all of which were well attended, showcasing the strong community interest in local wildlife. These included:

- * "Watch out for the bramble in our woodland ramble" – Weston Woods walk: 10am, Saturday 22 June – Led by River/Neil.
- * "Insect Habitats & Havens" – Led by Cathy/Neil.
- * "Critter Crawl for Kids" – Led by Neil/Cathy.
- * "Otley's Favourite Trees" – Led by Steve/Neil.
- * "Chevin Wildlife Friendly Gardens" – Led by River/Neil.
- * "Wildlife Friendly Gardens #2" – Led by River/Neil.
- * "Wildlife Friendly Gardens #3" – Led by River/Neil.

Wildlife Arts Festival 2024

The fourth iteration of our unique festival was once again a huge success thanks to our local creative community and the response of the wider community who turned out in numbers to attend. Featuring the usual central exhibition of high-quality wildlife pictures at the Courthouse, along with events, talks and workshops, the festival brought attention to our cause in the local media. Speakers included Tom Heap, Kate Bradbury, Tracy Lund and our patron George McGavin. Music was represented by Detta Kenzie, Trash Pandas, Paul Briscoe and Laura Barker-Bey; whilst



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the wildlife poetry session resulted in an excellent book. It was great to see children and schools involved in various ways – for example every child in Westgate school contributed a wildlife picture to an exhibition in their hall. We're grateful to festival sponsors Art Works, Sinclairs, the Wharfedale Naturalists Society, Otley Town Council, Leeds City Council and House of Pottery for their support.

Science Festival 2024

In November, we held a well-received stall at the Science Festival, with invaluable support from long-time member and former trustee Steve Heaton, who also led the highly popular Otley's Favourite Tree Walk, further engaging the public with our work.

Toad Patrol 2025

The success of our toad rescue patrols was repeated this spring. At East Busk Lane and Guiseley Drive a good number of dedicated volunteers turned out to help the migration of these fascinating amphibians. Cool weather meant a slow start to the season – for example at East Busk Lane only 10 toads had been spotted by the end of February – but by the end of March a remarkable 1959 toads had been helped at that site (not to mention newts and frogs, plus sightings of bats breaking their hibernation to feed up).

The Wharfedale Naturalists kindly supplied us with crucial safety signs for both our patrol sites (East Busk Lane and High Royds), significantly enhancing volunteer and amphibian safety. We have also been alerted to the strong possibility that the East Busk Lane site might qualify for West Yorkshire Local Wildlife Site status due to the exceptionally large number of migrating toads and the confirmed presence of palmate newts. We are actively investigating this exciting possibility, which would provide significant recognition and protection for this vital amphibian migration route.



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Finance and Governance

Coming from our new treasurer soon



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Habitat Restoration

We have made significant strides this year in improving and expanding vital spaces for wildlife across Otley. Through dedicated hands-on conservation work, collaborative efforts with landowners, the town council, and the city council, we have focused on creating, restoring, and connecting habitats to support richer and more resilient local ecosystems. Our collective efforts are helping to ensure Otley remains a thriving haven for wildlife, both now and for future generations.

Otley Town Council convened a biodiversity action group, in which WFO serves as a key partner in delivering nature recovery as outlined in our comprehensive Nature Recovery Plan. These productive meetings discuss and strategically decide upon practical and achievable targets for the coming season. These vital plans are meticulously documented in OTC's official Biodiversity Action Plan document, ensuring transparency and accountability.

One significant area we identified as a crucial wildlife corridor, and which, if augmented, would provide an attractive entry point into our wildlife-friendly town, was Pool Road. After a couple of initial setbacks with permissions and licenses, we successfully managed to sow the North Side with wildflowers in late autumn, marking a significant step forward in enhancing this route.

Our community orchards continue to mature beautifully, attracting both people and a diverse range of wildlife. We remain committed to augmenting the underplanting with additional plugs and wildflower seeds in the autumn, further enhancing their biodiversity.

We have also been actively working with Otley2030 on a joint venture known as the Future Weston Project. This ambitious project includes bringing free and renewable energy in the form of solar panels to both the Social Club and the Football Club. Crucially, it also involves significantly improving some of the green spaces on the Weston: specifically, the area in front of the social club, a corner of the green beside the football club transforming into a vibrant Community Nature Garden featuring wildflower meadow, nectar beds, and seating; and the green space surrounding the newly transformed play park becoming our fifth community orchard with beautiful wildflower underplanting.

We have continued our persistent, albeit so far unsuccessful, attempts to liaise with Leeds City Council regarding herbicide spraying. Our aim is to significantly reduce this practice in line with our proactive Pesticide Free Campaign, advocating for more environmentally sound land management.



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Almost six thousand informative leaflets about gardening for wildlife were successfully delivered by our dedicated volunteers to the residents of Otley, and we have received a substantial amount of positive feedback, indicating a strong community interest in supporting local wildlife.

This past year, we also proudly ran our first-ever Wildlife Friendly Garden Competition in partnership with Otley Town Council. We had the pleasure of visiting numerous inspiring wildlife-friendly gardens across Otley for the competition. There was a very encouraging response across most categories, which we are excited to build upon this year. Gardens comprise up to one-third of potential urban wildlife habitat, highlighting their immense importance. Building on the success of last year's inaugural competition, this year we are starting early to encourage members to submit photos of their gardens for wildlife and to actively plan their gardens to further encourage biodiversity. A new and exciting category specifically for Allotments will be added this year, further expanding the scope of our competition.



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Barn Owls

This year, trustee Mark Trewin successfully took over the leadership of the Barn Owl subcommittee from its esteemed founding member, Stewart Barlow, ensuring the continued vital work in monitoring and protecting these magnificent birds. Mark gave this update

“Our Barn Owl group has been busy making connections with local landowners and putting up nest boxes ready for this year's breeding season. Most of our work has been up at the Denton Reserve near Askwith where we now have 7 boxes on trees in different areas of the estate and another inside a nearby barn. In other areas we have placed new nest boxes by the river wharfe, to the west of Otley and near March Ghyll reservoir.

In total we now have over 20 boxes in place with more planned for the future.

These beautiful birds have suffered from a harsh winter and so we hope to help them recover.”

WILDLIFE FRIENDLY OTLEY

RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNTS

For the period from 01/04/2024 to 31/03/2025

Carried forward from 31/03/2024	4043.51
Receipts (Section A1)	7307.80
Payments (Section A2)	4756.64
Net	6594.67

Bank (Section B1)	7194.67
Petty cash (Section B2)	50.00
	7244.67

Brought forward from year ended 31/03/24	Restricted	Unrestricted	Total
	3640.33	94.18	4043.51

Section A1: Receipts made up of:

Donations from individuals	665.00	1833.71	2498.71
Donations from businesses/organisations	1836.82	226.00	2064.82
Wildlife Arts Festival 2024 OTC/LCC	477.00		477.00
Wharfedale Naturalists	302.07		302.07
Tesco: gardening equipment for children			0.00
Co-op Funeralcare			0.00
Events takings	2229.81	159.78	2389.59
Miscellaneous (calendars)		225.61	225.61
			0.00
	5510.70	2447.10	7957.80

Section A2: Payments made up of:

Website		903.20	903.20
Bank charges		10.90	10.90
Events expenses	2282.99	110.00	2392.99
Feed the Birds (Co-Op)	567.00		567.00
Wildlife - direct support (barn owl camera)		120.00	120.00
Wildlife for schools	27.44		27.44
Miscellaneous expenses		430.00	430.00
Stationery & printing			0.00
Insurance		159.60	159.60
Habitat restoration	145.51		145.51
	3022.94	1733.70	4756.64

Surplus/(Deficit) in year ending 31/03/2024

2487.76	713.40	3201.16
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Carried forward at 31/03/2024

6437.09	807.58	7244.67
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Made up of:

7244.67

Section B1: Bank account:

Opening balance at 01/04/2024	3693.51
Receipts	7957.80
Payments	-4756.64
	7194.67

Section B2: Petty cash:

Opening balance at 01/04/2024	50.00
Receipts	0.00
Payments	0.00
	50.00

7244.67

Section B3: Notes to the accounts:

Signature:

B. Jones

Date:

19/4/25

Trustee & Treasurer, Wildlife Friendly Otley