

Ulster Wildlife Trust

Northern Ireland · Charity number 101848

Details

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Register	View on the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland register

Contact

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Activities

Purposes: The advancement of environmental protection and improvement, in particular the conservation of all aspects of Northern Ireland and its adjacent areas' wildlife, biodiversity, geodiversity and associated natural beauty for the benefit of present and future generations by: (a) safeguarding, maintaining and enhancing natural biodiversity and geodiversity through the management of nature reserves; (b) practising, advocating, encouraging, influencing, advising and campaigning for best conservation practice involving land, sea and freshwater management practice in ways that favour biodiversity, geodiversity, ecosystem health, sustainable use of natural resources and sustainable development; (c) undertaking action, independently or in partnership, to protect threatened habitats, sites of geodiversity or heritage significance, at local, national or international levels on or in water, land and adjacent seas; (d) taking account of other aspects of the natural heritage on which wildlife is dependent or to which it contributes, including landforms, and landscapes; (e) improving the quality of life of people through supporting a biodiversity, eco-system, geodiversity and sustainability-led approach to the management and design of the natural and built environment. The advancement of education by raising the public's awareness and knowledge of all aspects of the natural and built heritage, biodiversity and geodiversity of Northern Ireland and its adjacent areas by promoting, undertaking and co-operating in research and gathering and sharing information on, these topics. The advancement of citizenship through volunteering linked to natural heritage including the promotion of sustainable food production and sustainable lifestyles. The advancement of the arts, culture, heritage and science linked to natural heritage through events and project based action. The advancement of health and wellbeing through activities linked to the natural environment.

What the charity does: The advancement of environmental protection or improvement

How the charity works: Advice/advocacy/information, Education/training, Environment/sustainable development/conservation, Research/evaluation, Volunteer development, Youth development

Who the charity helps: Children (5-13 year olds), General public, Volunteers, Youth (14-25 year olds)

Finances

Period end	Income	Expenditure	Assets	Employees
2025-03-31	£3,747,246	£3,704,098	£-679,247	48

Trustees

Name	Role	Appointed
David Hendron		
Dr Robert Brown		
John Witchell		
Miss Chloe Craig		
Mr Ciarán Ferrin		
Mr Niall Marshall		
Mr Richard Buchanan		
Mr Seamus Mckee		
Mr Stephen Peers Aston		
Mrs Gillian Mckee		
Mrs Karen Hall		
Mrs Orla Rafferty		
Ms Catherine Thompson		
Professor Nigel Scollan		
Sir David Sterling		

Accounts



**Ulster
Wildlife**

Our Year for Nature, People and Climate

Ulster Wildlife Trust

**Annual Report &
Accounts 24-25**



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Common thrift © Simon Gray

Foreword

2024/25 was a challenging year for the Charity with the passing of our CEO, Jennifer Fulton in early May 2024, following a short illness. You can read a dedication to Jennifer in last year's Annual Report here – www.ulsterwildlife.org/publications

Despite this significant loss, the charity continued to rise to the challenge of restoring nature, empowering people, and confronting the climate crisis head-on. I must pay tribute to the Board and staff at Ulster Wildlife for their resilience and dedication during this difficult period. The Senior staff at Ulster Wildlife alternated 'acting up' into the CEO role through to the autumn of 2024, when the Board ran a public recruitment exercise to appoint a new CEO for Ulster Wildlife, which garnered significant interest from applicants.

Following this recruitment exercise we were delighted to welcome Dawn Miskelly as our new CEO in November 2024. Dawn's long-standing dedication to Ulster Wildlife, beginning as a volunteer over two decades ago, uniquely positions her to drive nature's recovery forward in Northern Ireland, championing efforts in natural climate solutions, peatland restoration, species recovery, farmland wildlife and marine protection. We are confident that her leadership will guide us towards a bright future that benefits both wildlife and local communities.

During the year we pioneered peatland restoration at Garry Bog and expanded our network of native oyster nurseries and nature reserves and discovered new breeding sites for endangered species such as the marsh fritillary butterfly. Each of these successes demonstrates what can be achieved when science, local

knowledge, and long-term vision come together to benefit nature's recovery.

This year, more people than ever have connected with nature through our events, wellbeing initiatives, and volunteering opportunities. Whether it's 'The Meadow Ladies' creating a safe and supportive space for women in West Belfast, or young leaders gaining qualifications in nature-based wellbeing, we've seen the transformative power of nature for individuals and communities alike.

With the return of the Northern Ireland Assembly in February 2024, our advocacy and policy work took on a stronger focus this year. Through the NI Marine Task Force and direct engagement with government departments, we've helped shape key policies around marine conservation, farming, blue carbon, and more. At every opportunity, we have spoken up for wildlife and the ecosystems we all depend on.

Of course, none of this work would be possible without our members, funders, donors, partners and volunteers. Their commitment fuels our work and strengthens our resolve. As we look ahead, we remain guided by the ambitious goals set out in our Strategy to 'Bring Nature Back'. There is still much to do but with our supportive network, we are building a future where nature not only survives but thrives.



John Witchell
Chair of Ulster Wildlife

Highlights of our year for wildlife



April 24

Recognition for Investing in Volunteers

We were proud to have renewed our 'Investing in Volunteers' accreditation, through Volunteer Now, which recognises our continued commitment to providing a high-quality experience for everyone who volunteers with us. The award reflects the steps we've taken to review and improve the quality of our volunteer experience and to ensure volunteers feel welcomed, included, supported and valued. From helping to manage nature reserves and native oyster nurseries, to recording peatland wildlife and supporting the membership team in the office, volunteers are at the heart of everything that we do. Our mission would not be possible without their passion and dedication to the cause.



May 24

First water stick insect discovered in Northern Ireland

A remarkable discovery was made at our Bog Meadows Nature Reserve when a local schoolboy from West Belfast discovered the first-ever water stick insect recorded in Northern Ireland. Kohen spotted the rare creature during a school pond-dipping activity which revealed what he first thought was a floating stick. Despite the wet weather, luck and sharp eyes were on his side. The water stick insect *Ranatra linearis* was first recorded in Wexford, Ireland, in 2016, by entomologist Brian Nelson. While deemed native to Ireland, its presence has only been documented relatively recently, with a total of 16 sightings across the country. Bog Meadows Nature Reserve now stands as the first location in Northern Ireland to record its presence.



June 24

Farmer celebrates six years of helping barn owls

Strangford farmer David Sandford celebrated six consecutive years of giving barn owls a home, as a pair returned to his wildlife-friendly farm in spring to raise their young. With fewer than 30 breeding pairs of barn owls estimated to remain in Northern Ireland, his farm is one of the most successful breeding sites in the country for these vulnerable birds. David's journey began a decade ago when he encountered a barn owl during an evening walk across his fields – the first time he'd seen one in over 30 years. Intrigued that the birds might be breeding nearby, he reached out to Ulster Wildlife to install some nest boxes to complement the nature-rich habitats he had created. Since then, David's 185-acre arable farm has now provided a safe haven for 15 owlets – showing how farming and wildlife conservation can thrive together.



July 24

Expansion of Balloo Wetland to benefit biodiversity

We were delighted to almost double the size of our Balloo Wetland Nature Reserve, in Bangor, thanks to a land transfer from Radius Housing to Ards and North Down Borough Council. This important expansion will help create an even larger and more connected haven for nature's recovery. Our vision is to let this area 'rewild' itself with minimal human intervention. This natural approach will provide a buffer to the nature reserve, boosting the abundance, resilience and diversity of wildlife. While the new area will not be accessible to the public, its proximity to the nature reserve, which is open as usual for everyone to enjoy, will help bring local people closer to nature.



© Jim Higham

August 24

Fermanagh's flower-rich grasslands rediscovered and protected

We mapped hundreds of hectares of Fermanagh's flower-rich grasslands to ensure vital protection through the Environmental Farming Scheme (EFS). Since the 1930s, the UK has seen a devastating 97% decline in species-rich grasslands, leaving only rare and vulnerable fragments. Over the past three years, we surveyed 858 hectares of grassland, equivalent to 1,200 football pitches – collecting detailed data on location, extent, quality and condition to aid planning and decision-making. 60% of these areas are now eligible for agri-environment payments. This work not only protects a precious habitat but also demonstrates how conservation can support rural livelihoods.



© Simon Gray

September 24

New breeding site discovered for marsh fritillary butterfly

We are delighted to have found a new breeding site for the endangered marsh fritillary butterfly near Black Bog Special Area of Conservation in the South Sperrins. While partnering with Butterfly Conservation NI during a workshop, we spotted the distinctive webs spun by the caterpillars. True to their name, marsh fritillary thrives in sunny, wet and boggy areas rich in the plant devil's-bit scabious – their favourite food source. We're now collaborating with local landowners to protect and manage this special site, an area of precious peatland, aiming to ensure the survival of this vulnerable species for years to come.

Highlights of our year for wildlife



October 24

Youth awarded first-of-its-kind certificate in leading nature-based wellbeing activities

Five young people from Greater Belfast became the first to receive our new AQA Level 2 Certificate in Facilitating Nature-Based Activities for Wellbeing. This certificate, the first of its kind in Northern Ireland, equips young leaders with the skills and confidence to conduct nature-based activities that promote mental and physical wellbeing, enabling them to help others experience nature's healing benefits. As part of their training, the young leaders learned the theory behind nature connection, explored the "Five Ways to Wellbeing," practised safety protocols, and gained practical experience in delivering nature-based wellness activities.



November 24

Peatland restoration training upsills local contractors

Over 30 local contractors and restoration practitioners gained vital hands-on training in peatland restoration techniques to support this critical work. Two intensive courses were organised by our Peatland Collaborative Network Officer to ensure more local professionals have the skills and knowledge needed to restore and manage these essential habitats – vital in helping nature recover, filtering water, alleviating flooding and storing carbon. The courses, facilitated by the Crichton Carbon Centre, at Haughey's Bog, showcased techniques such as installing peat dams, bunding, and reprofiling, and explored machinery specification, costs and legal considerations.



© Russell Savory

December 24

Nest and Nooks Appeal launched

We launched our annual fundraising appeal 'Nests and Nooks' to raise vital funds to help safeguard iconic species like barn owls, hedgehogs and red squirrels. With one in nine species in Northern Ireland at risk of extinction, our cherished wildlife faces mounting challenges. Thanks to the generosity of our members and supporters, we were delighted to reach our £10,000 fundraising target. These vital funds will help us create safe spaces for these iconic species to thrive – whether it's through habitat restoration or creating safe nesting sites. A heartfelt thank you to everyone who contributed. Your donations are already making a tangible difference.

© Jon Hawkins Surrey Hill Photography



January 25

Winter talks programme launched

We launched our annual programme of online winter talks, bringing the wonders of Northern Ireland's wildlife and wild places straight to people's homes. Every week online, from January to March, members and supporters were able to explore a diverse range of topics with expert speakers. From large-scale bog restoration to improving your garden for your favourite species and the latest advancements in high-tech conservation efforts, each session offered a fascinating insight into the vital work being done to protect our natural world. All the talks were recorded and are available to watch back anytime on our YouTube channel.



February 25

Marine Conference makes waves for a sustainable future

We hosted our inaugural 'Blue Horizons' marine science conference at W5, which brought together 170 attendees over two days of insightful talks and discussions under the theme "Reviving our seas through innovation for a sustainable future". The conference showcased cutting-edge research and action in marine science required to safeguard marine life for future generations. Topics included marine habitat restoration, marine spatial planning, and innovation and featured 30 posters, 25 talks, and two keynote lectures. Representatives from industry, academia, environmental organisations, government, and the wider public, united in a shared mission to safeguard our local marine environment.



March 25

Native oysters return to Carrickfergus

Native oysters made a return to Carrickfergus as part of efforts to restore Belfast Lough's small but endangered population. Over 900 mature native oysters (*Ostrea edulis*) have been suspended underwater in 30 purpose-built baskets over the edges of Carrickfergus Marina's pontoons to help revive the species. The initiative will see up to 900 million oyster larvae released into surrounding waters every year. In addition to supporting the expansion of wild populations, the oysters will help boost biodiversity and improve water quality by filtering pollutants. The new nursery forms part of a network of native oyster nurseries including Bangor Marina, Belfast Harbour, and Glenarm. Together, they aim to bring the native oyster back from the brink of extinction.



Bringing nature back

Our new strategy to put nature into recovery by 2030 has ambitious goals and builds upon our work over the last 45 years to deliver impactful change for nature. It drives us towards our vision of a wilder future, where everyone is inspired to get involved in nature's recovery, and where wildlife plays a key role in addressing the nature and climate emergencies. Although it is a bold and complex challenge, it is a necessity – and the solution to the very real and present dangers that nature and people face in the midst of a climate and nature emergency.

Our ability to galvanize people to take action, to work collaboratively to achieve the greatest impact for nature, and our knowledge, experience, 'localness' and innovative ways of working, are our core strengths. Together, and with the support of local communities, farmers, landowners, businesses, and our members who stand with us, we are in the best place possible to turn our vision into a reality – and ensure the recovery of our natural world.

Public Benefit

- The Trustees of Ulster Wildlife have taken into account the Charity Commission's guidance on Public Benefit, and consider it fully when planning and reviewing the charity's actions and outcomes and in planning our future activities.
- This Trustees' Report shows how we performed against our strategic outcomes in 2024/25.
- Ulster Wildlife's charitable objectives as set out in our Articles of Association can be found on page 30.

Our Vision

A wilder future where people and nature are thriving together

Our Purpose

Our purpose is to protect and restore nature on land and at sea. We will play our part in ending the climate and ecological emergencies, creating a society where nature is valued and is part of our daily lives.

Our Strategic Outcomes for 2030

1. NATURE - Nature is in recovery and wildlife is thriving across Northern Ireland.

2. PEOPLE - More people are taking positive action for nature and climate and are benefitting from time spent in nature.

3. CLIMATE - Nature-based solutions are playing a central role in addressing climate change.

Outcome 1 Nature

Nature is in recovery and wildlife is thriving across Northern Ireland

With one in nine species at risk of extinction here, we need to reverse the decline and bring nature back. It has become clear that protecting what we have left is no longer enough. It is our aim to create new spaces for nature by connecting habitats and restoring landscapes, and by working collaboratively to help species and habitats recover.

879 hectares of land managed for wildlife (equivalent to 1231 football pitches)

550 farmers and landowners received advice

221 Surveyed woodlands for red squirrels and pine martens

15 barn owl nest-boxes erected in key locations

180 species identified on and surrounding the native oyster nurseries





Barn owl box installation

Barn Owls

2024 has been another successful year for breeding barn owls with several highlights demonstrating real progress in helping these endangered birds bounce back.

We celebrated a remarkable milestone as one nest minder marked six consecutive years of barn owls breeding on their farm, with a special celebratory event to recognise the achievement.

We installed 15 new nest boxes and continued to support landowners and nest minders by providing land management advice. To increase our understanding of barn owl behaviour, we installed more cameras at barn owl nest sites – allowing us to watch the journey from egg to fledging. We also trialed different predator proofing methods, to better protect nest sites.

Partnership remains at the heart of this work. We continued to collaborate with other organisations such as BirdWatch Ireland, the Barn Owl Trust, RSPB NI, the BTO and Queen's University Belfast. A highlight of the year was joining the Barn Owl Trust in Devon and spending several days knowledge sharing. We also worked closely with BirdWatch Ireland on a study looking at barn owl diet across Ireland.

Our barn owl conservation efforts reached new audiences in 2024: our work featured on BBC Countryfile, and an incredible 12ft barn owl mural was unveiled at our Bog Meadows Nature Reserve, in conjunction with the Ark of Extinction, raising awareness and inspiring action.



Red Squirrel at Mount Stewart © Katy Bell

Red Squirrels

We began 2024 with our biennial Squirrel and Pine Marten Survey, surveying 221 woodlands across Northern Ireland supported by 12 different partners including other eNGO's, stakeholders, and Red Squirrel Volunteer Groups.

Preliminary findings show that red squirrel populations are once again holding strong on a landscape scale. However, invasive grey squirrels still pose a threat.

Throughout the year, we verified 533 squirrel and pine marten sightings providing valuable data on the distribution of red squirrel, grey squirrel and pine marten across Northern Ireland. These sightings help inform us where to establish new woodland surveys and are also usually the first way to determine any distribution changes.

We were also delighted to partner with Power NI in October to help promote sightings during Red Squirrel Awareness Week, both online and at some key woodland sites across the country. Public engagement remains central to our work. We carried out seven talks reaching an audience of 289 people and supported local councils with advice on how to protect red squirrels and further their conservation.



Hedgehogs © Jon Hawkins Surrey Hills Photography

Hedgehogs

During 2024, we continued our work with NUI Galway and CEDaR to collect hedgehog sightings and build a bigger picture of their distribution across Northern Ireland. These records provide a valuable insight into how hedgehogs are doing and how we can help them.

As part of our relaunch of our 'Let Nature In' wildlife gardening campaign, a dedicated officer joined our team in November 2024. This initiative encourages people to create space for nature in their own gardens, with a particular focus on helping hedgehogs. As hedgehogs are relying more and more on our urban environments, our gardens play a vital role in protecting this charismatic species.

Throughout the year, we delivered a number of talks to raise awareness of wildlife gardening, bees and hedgehogs. We also began engaging with garden centres and Housing Associations to make a bigger impact with the campaign – promoting wildlife friendly choices when choosing plants for their gardens.

In March, we spoke at 'The Greening Social Housing' conference where Housing Associations attendees were very interested to find out more about ways they can improve their housing stock for nature.

Puffin © Ronald Surgenor



Nature Reserves

Our 19 nature reserves represent some of the best sites for nature conservation in Northern Ireland. They are home to a diverse range of important habitats and some of the country's rarest and most threatened species.

A major development this year was the purchase of Fedian, our newest nature reserve in Co. Fermanagh. This stunning 91-acre site is home to exceptional species-rich grassland and ancient woodland and will now be safeguarded for the future.

This year's wildlife highlights included a record count of small egggar moth webs at the Umbra Nature Reserve – an annually monitored species which is now found across the site. Even more remarkably, we also discovered a new species of moth for Ireland: the northern barred groundling (*Caryocolum blandelloides*), a sand dune specialist previously only known from coastal sites in north-east Scotland.

For the first time in living memory, puffins were spotted at the Isle of Muck – a good sign that our annual rat control programme is having a positive effect on the island's seabirds. Meanwhile, black guillemot numbers at Isle of Muck and nearby Portmuck remain stable.

2024 also saw the expansion of our oak halo-ing works at Glenarm to safeguard the veteran and ancient oaks which thrive here, alongside an extensive programme of non-native species monitoring and removal across our nature reserves.

Nature Recovery Networks

Over the past year, we've made strong progress in advancing the Nature Recovery Network (NRN) principles of 'more, bigger, better and more connected' wildlife-rich spaces across Northern Ireland.

We've helped shape capacity for NRN delivery in both urban and landscape-scale projects, which we hope to see come into fruition within the next year. We've also engaged diverse audiences, through case studies and talks, such as at the Making Space for Nature-conference at QUB, as well as providing input and guidance to policy makers.

We've advocated for NRN principles and the use of habitat network maps in our consultation responses and took a proactive role in shaping key policy areas, such as Local Development Plans and the new Farming with Nature agri-environment scheme.

In February, we organised a workshop around the concept of '30 by 30' (the global ambition of protecting 30% of land, freshwater and sea by 2030). With more than 50 attendees, the workshop brought together key stakeholders to begin shaping a roadmap to achieve this ambitious goal in Northern Ireland, utilising the NRN principles.



Nature Recovery Networks 30by30 workshop

Small egggar caterpillars



Partnership Sites

We continued our valued collaboration with the Ministry of Defence (MOD) to enhance biodiversity and priority habitats at two MOD Training Centres: Ballykinler TC, located within the Murlough Special Area of Conservation (SAC), and Magilligan TC, situated in the Magilligan SAC.

Both sites are outstanding examples of dune and grassland habitats, supporting a range of important and rare species. Ballykinler is home to the rare blue fleabane, while Magilligan supports the scarce crimson and gold moth, small egggar moth, and the northern colletes bee.

This year's conservation efforts included the targeted removal of invasive sea buckthorn and gorse, while carefully retaining stands of blackthorn essential for small egggar caterpillars. Coastal erosion presented additional challenges, requiring ongoing adaptive management.

Grazing with livestock remains a key tool in maintaining the rich diversity of plant and insect life across both sites. By working closely with local graziers, we ensured conservation grazing was delivered at optimal levels in targeted areas.

Regular habitat and species monitoring remains central to our approach, providing the evidence base to guide and refine management actions and ensure these vital landscapes continue to thrive.



Environmental Farming Scheme

In 2024, our Environmental Farming Scheme (EFS) Group Programme, funded by DAERA, entered its eighth year. Despite wider uncertainty around the future of agri-environment support, the programme continued to deliver real impact, growing to over 550 farm members and supporting practical conservation at scale.

This year saw a slowdown in the growth of new agreements, with DAERA reducing the number of applications. Our Group supported the creation of around 30 new EFS Agreements, with around one quarter of the 920 EFS Agreements in Group schemes being delivered by Ulster Wildlife, although the overall reach of the scheme is expected to decline in the coming period as a new scheme is developed and launched.

Nonetheless, we continued to innovate and collaborate. A highlight of 2024 was our new partnership with Queen's University Belfast through their GROW Project, funded by EIT Food. In August, we welcomed farmers, policymakers, and researchers to two farms in Glen and Churchill, where a profitable, low-input grazing system using Angus cattle on species-rich grassland and heathland was showcased. Their EFS-managed upland complements a lowland finishing system based on grass and spent grain from a local distillery – demonstrating how high nature value farming and economic viability can go hand in hand.

Our cross-border collaboration with the Leitrim Sustainable Agriculture Group also deepened, with a series of six 'artist walks' funded by the Shared Island Arts Programme. These celebrated the beauty and complexity of working farms through hedgerows, hay meadows, spring water sources, and organic practices. Poets, potters, and other artists were inspired by the land, while events were catered by local food producers and created rich opportunities for dialogue between Fermanagh and Leitrim farmers. The walks were highly popular, and plans are already underway to expand them in 2025.

We also strengthened our existing support to farmers, focusing on grassland and peatland management, and continued our collaboration with RSPB NI to help farmers manage land for breeding waders such as curlew in the Fermanagh area. Our education and outreach programme included on-farm events, tailored advice, and farmer walks, ensuring members could make informed decisions about managing carbon, efficiency, and biodiversity as new policies emerge.

Public Affairs, Policy and Legislation

With the return of the NI Assembly in February 2024, we have stepped up our engagement in public affairs throughout the last year, working to champion nature's recovery through targeted policy engagement and consultation responses. Our public affairs work focused on influencing government decision-making and ensuring that environmental concerns remain firmly on the political agenda.

We submitted detailed responses to a number of key consultations, including The Draft Programme for Government, The Review of Environmental Governance, Draft Environmental Principles and the Establishment of a Just Transition Commission. We also continued our active involvement in the co-design of the new 'Farming with Nature' agri-environment scheme being developed by DAERA, ensuring that the voice of nature is represented in future farming policy.

As a lead member of the Northern Ireland Marine Task Force (NIMTF), we made significant contributions to several important marine consultations, including the Blue Carbon Action Plan, the Marine Protected Area (MPA) Strategy Review, the Seabird Conservation Strategy and Action Plan and the Elasmobranch (shark, skate, and ray) Conservation Strategy.

To support the Elasmobranch Strategy, NIMTF hosted a dedicated public consultation event

to facilitate collaboration between stakeholders and build support for the conservation of these vulnerable species.

In the continued absence of a Northern Ireland Marine Plan, we worked closely with the Department for the Economy to shape an Offshore Renewable Energy Action Plan that prioritises environmental sustainability. We also met with DAERA and the Department for Infrastructure to propose a roadmap for tackling water quality issues – particularly in light of ongoing pollution crises in Lough Neagh and Belfast Lough.

NIMTF's political engagement extended across five party conferences—DUP, Alliance, UUP, Green Party, and SDLP – where we highlighted the importance of marine conservation to MLAs and MPs. This advocacy was strengthened through a Wish Fish campaign which gathered public concerns on marine issues and ensured those voices were heard directly by policymakers.

Farming with nature: creating a haven for barn owls

At the Kelly's farm, outside Downpatrick, years of dedicated habitat creation and wildlife-friendly practices paid off last year in the most rewarding way with the arrival of their first confirmed breeding pair of barn owls.

“For several years, barn owls have been regular visitors to our farm but last year marked a milestone with the arrival of our first confirmed breeding pair. Having barn owls present year-round gives us a real sense of achievement and is clear proof that our wildlife-friendly farming practices are paying off.

Over time, we've installed five indoor and five outdoor nesting boxes to support the owls. As a cereal farm, we naturally provide an abundant food source – mice and rats – that sustains not only barn owls but other birds of prey too. In addition, areas of winter bird cover and retained stubble offer essential food for birds and mammals during the colder months, while rough grass margins provide ideal nesting habitats for small mammals like mice.

We take pride in managing our hedgerows for wildlife. By cutting them in an A-shape, we encourage dense growth for nesting birds. Our three-year cutting rotation allows hedges to flower and produce berries, benefitting both insects and birds. We also maintain pollinator margins and species-rich meadows to support a healthy insect population, which forms the base of a thriving ecosystem.

Support from agri-environment schemes has been vital – giving us the financial security and confidence to maintain our nature-focused approach to farming. We also work closely with conservation organisations such as Ulster Wildlife and RSPB NI, whose expert guidance helps us enhance the farm's value for wildlife. If you want to encourage barn owls, the formula is simple: create habitats that support plenty of prey – through cereal crops and rough grassland—and provide safe nesting opportunities by installing a few well-placed boxes. Then, as we've learned, wait patiently – and nature may just reward your efforts.”

Adam and Jack Kelly with Katy Bell



One of the first barn owl chicks welcomed at Kelly's farm

Outcome 2 People

More people are taking positive action for nature and climate and are benefitting from time spent in nature

Without more people taking action themselves, the fight to protect nature and tackle the climate crisis is an insurmountable task. We need to engage and empower people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities to take action and stand up for nature, and also to reconnect people with wild places and green spaces. By increasing the number of people who can speak up for nature, our collective voice will be louder and reach further than ever before.

Corporate volunteers at Slieve Donard Nature Reserve

135 active
volunteers

8,635 volunteer hours
given to nature

13,669 members

**Over
10,000** people learned
about nature at
our events

21 Youth Forum
members

Young people who received their certificates in Facilitating Nature-Based Activities for Wellbeing



Wildlife Watch leaders and children at Slievenacloy Nature Reserve



Youth Forum members who took part in a bird box building workshop



Wild Youth

This year, we helped more than 200 young people in north and west Belfast enjoy the health and wellbeing benefits of nature through weekly 'wild wellness' sessions held in the Belfast Hills.

These were delivered as part of our Wild Youth project, a joint project with Belfast Hills Partnership, funded by the National Lottery Community Fund.

Participants spent over 1,000 hours making art outside, exploring local green spaces, and just generally having fun in nature. Asked about their experiences at the end of the programme, young people reported feeling "more relaxed, creative, and connected to nature and their peers."

In addition to these weekly sessions, we were delighted to deliver our Wild Youth Leader Training course for the second time. Now officially accredited, the course equips participants with the skills and confidence to facilitate nature-based activities for wellbeing. Twelve young people graduated with a certificate in 'Facilitating Nature-Based Activities for Wellbeing' as well as new skills and improved confidence.

Wildlife Watch Groups

Wildlife Watch Groups continue to meet once a month, with groups offering a mix of games, nature-based crafts, and opportunities to make new friends while exploring the natural world for children aged between 8 and 12.

Recent sessions have enabled children to discover the fascinating lives of bats, fungi, birds, and marine mammals. Ulster Wildlife staff have visited to share their expertise on native trees and barn owls, adding a special touch to the learning experience. Outdoor highlights this year included rockpooling, beach art, and planting wildflower seeds.

A highlight is the annual 'get-together' of all Wildlife Watch Groups for a day of fun and creativity. This year's event took place at Orangefield Park in Belfast where the children created their own nature art gallery, handmade nature bookmarks, clay tree art, and 'dream catchers' crafted from sticks, leaves and feathers collected locally.

The success of Wildlife Watch Groups is thanks to a dedicated network of volunteer leaders who design exciting programmes throughout the year. Guest speakers also join the groups to inspire the next generation with their knowledge and passion for local wildlife.

Wildlife Watch is more than just a club – it's a community where children grow their love for nature and become champions for the natural environment.

Youth Forum

It was another busy year for the 21 members of our Youth Forum – a platform that empowers young people to advocate for nature, participate in campaigns and take action for wildlife.

A highlight included visiting our new peatland restoration site at Haughey's Bog, outside Omagh. Here the Youth Forum learned about the importance of peatlands for nature, people and climate while removing invasive trees from the bog to support habitat recovery. Members also carried out practical conservation work at our Bog Meadows Nature Reserve, removing Himalayan balsam alongside other young Ulster Wildlife volunteers.

Team building activities helped to strengthen bonds within the group while some individual members pursued their own nature-based projects. For instance, one member, Ellen, spoke at Stormont in front of MLA's and senior civil servants about her concerns for the marine environment – an inspiring example of youth advocacy. Youth Forum members also got to meet the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People, Chris Quinn, at an event held at Greenmount College where young voices were heard on a range of environmental issues.

Bog Meadows garden volunteers and partners



Bog Meadows – Our People, Our Places

Through a wide range of community-led initiatives, Bog Meadows has become a vibrant hub where people and nature flourish together, thanks to the support from the National Lottery Community Fund.

The butterfly survey group meets weekly and is also learning to survey bumblebees. The youth volunteer team meets monthly to carry out a range of practical conservation activities that also count towards youth awards. Garden volunteers meet weekly to maintain a thriving wildlife garden, create a new meadow and grow native wildflower plugs.

'The Meadow Ladies', a women's support network, run weekly, nature inspired wellbeing activities and host wider community events. The Wildlife Watch children's group meet regularly to learn about wildlife and take action for nature.

Our 'Nature Fit' volunteers meet weekly to assist with all aspects of the upkeep of the nature reserve.

Additional initiatives to deepen nature connection include the Winter Solstice event, Meadow Heart project, the creation of a barn owl mural and a number of nature wellbeing sessions for groups.

Blue Horizons Conference at W5



Marine Protected Areas Community Engagement

This year we developed collaborative efforts to promote and enhance Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) around Northern Ireland. By engaging with both the public and key stakeholders, our ambition was to ensure proper stewardship of our marine environment.

During the summer, we attended 29 events which included large scale festivals and targeted community events. We engaged with more than 9,600 members of the public using an array of techniques - marine specimens, marine mammal models, and virtual reality '360' videos, to immerse people in the marine environment.

Demonstrating our commitment to advancing marine protection, we hosted the inaugural 'Blue Horizons' Conference at W5 Belfast, bringing together over 170 attendees for two days of discussion on marine habitat restoration, spatial planning, and sustainable innovation. With 25 talks, 30 posters, and keynote lectures, the event sparked collaboration across sectors. It showcased real-world solutions and cutting-edge research, reinforcing momentum toward ambitious conservation targets and a sustainable future for Northern Ireland's seas.

AlB volunteers at Bog Meadows Nature Reserve



Volunteering

Over the past year, we have continued to grow and diversify our volunteering opportunities through new roles and initiatives.

We welcomed 29 volunteer groups from businesses, involving 380 staff members who generously contributed over 1,800 hours to support our nature reserves team. Their efforts included sapling removal on peatland sites, ragwort clearance at Slievenacloy, and sycamore scrub control at Umbra. Several groups also helped our Bog Meadows team with grass cutting and path clearance, creating a living fence, and a new wildflower area for pollinators and visitors to enjoy.

We launched new volunteer initiatives with the opening of oyster nurseries in Carrickfergus and Belfast. Following several successful training days, 65% of participants signed up as registered volunteers to assist our teams with ongoing monitoring and checks.

We also welcomed three new Wildlife Watch Leaders to continue the success of our Wildlife Watch Groups, providing young children with engaging opportunities to learn about nature and the environment.

Additionally, new volunteer roles were introduced at our office, supporting the Fundraising and Communications team. We also hosted successful student placements across various teams, including nature reserves, marine, and peatlands, as well as 12-week Master's Student Placements within the Northern Ireland Marine Task Force and Priority Species team. A conservative estimate equates the time given by our volunteers to over £70,000 of 'match-funding'.

Young people who took part in the Binevenagh Youth Residential



Binevenagh Youth Residential

Twenty-five young people attended our week-long summer residential run in collaboration with the Magilligan Field Centre and Binevenagh Landscape Partnership.

The residential provides young people with the opportunity to explore and connect with our nearby Umbra Nature Reserve while completing a range of activities to achieve their Gold Duke of Edinburgh's Award. Activities included everything from peatland restoration tasks and squirrel feeder construction to tree seed collection and rocky shore ecology. A highlight was an inspirational hike and talk from Hannah Shields, the first woman from Northern Ireland to reach the summit of Mount Everest.

Derryvullan Old church Ruins funded by the Landfill Communities Fund



Landfill Communities Fund

This year, we helped distribute £407,000 of Landfill Communities Fund contributions from Fermanagh and Omagh District Council and Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council to 20 community and environmental projects.

The Landfill Communities Fund (LCF) is a grant scheme enabling landfill site operators to contribute a portion of the monies they pay as landfill tax directly to approved Environmental Bodies, such as Ulster Wildlife. Ulster Wildlife can then distribute this money to projects of environmental and public benefit.

2024 saw an increase in activity with projects undertaken that met local objectives such as improving parks or amenities, repairing or restoring a place of worship, or historic buildings open to the general public or conservation of species or habitats. For the remaining lifespan of the scheme, funds will continue to be distributed to projects which are aligned with our own strategic goals of promoting health and wellbeing through enjoyment of the environment and rebuilding biodiversity.

Exclusive members' boat trip to the Gobbins and Isle of Muck Nature Reserve



Exclusive Member Events

This year, we continued to grow our popular programme of exclusive member events, offering opportunities to connect with nature and deepen engagement with our work.

Our online winter talks returned with an expanded line-up of expert guest speakers and fresh topics. From bird ringing and bog restoration to high-tech conservation techniques and hedgehog protection, the sessions proved a hit with members seeking inspiration during the darker winter months.

As the seasons changed, we launched an extensive spring and summer programme of in-person events, many available exclusively to Ulster Wildlife members. These included wildlife boat trips, guided nature walks, birdwatching tours, and fungi forays – providing memorable encounters with nature in stunning locations across Northern Ireland.

In September, we welcomed over 100 members to our AGM and Members' Day at Oxford Island Nature Reserve. The day featured a lively mix of talks, guided walks, and the chance to meet staff, volunteers and fellow members.



The Meadow Ladies butterfly survey group

Nature, friendship, and belonging: the story of the Meadow Ladies

What began as a simple wellbeing walk has blossomed into a thriving community of women supporting each other through nature. Over the past three years, The Meadow Ladies – a women's support network founded by Patricia McDonnell – has gone from strength to strength. Weekly nature-inspired wellbeing activities, skills workshops and community events have made a real difference to the lives of local women.

“It all started with an over-50s wellbeing walk I attended at Bog Meadows. At the time, I was out of work due to ill health and feeling isolated. This led to more opportunities to get involved in Bog Meadows and the surrounding area, where I trained as a walk and cycle leader with Sustrans. Eventually, with support from Ulster Wildlife, I set up our own women's wellbeing group now called 'The Meadow Ladies'. In no time, we had 12 members. I wanted to give back and support others facing similar challenges.

For the past two years, we've been doing all sorts of activities and learning new skills, from crafts and woodwork to nature walks and photography. The friendship, support and sense of community we've built is outstanding – we're like a big family. In our first year, we even secured funding to conduct a butterfly survey. Now, we all get involved, learning about butterflies and getting excited about nature – it was a huge achievement for us.

We stay connected through a WhatsApp group, where we share local community events and meet up. I'm so proud of how our group has developed. It's given me a strong sense of belonging, and I want others to feel that same happiness and fulfilment. I'd love to see more younger women join, and I'd also welcome more referrals from the mental health team, as the group has helped me so much.



Patricia McDonnell
Founder of The Meadow Ladies

Outcome 3 Climate

Nature-based solutions are playing a critical role in addressing the impacts of climate change in Northern Ireland

We are in the midst of nature and climate crises and neither can be resolved in isolation. The natural world can provide its own solutions to combat and reverse these threats. We are promoting the implementation of nature-based solutions such as the restoration of peatlands and of coastal blue carbon habitats to provide carbon sequestration and storage while supporting resilient wildlife.

130 hectares of peatland restored

125 hectares of invasive species controlled

3800 hectares of peatland surveyed

17.25 km of shore surveyed for wild native oysters

>200 million litres of water filtered by native oysters across our nurseries



Peatland restoration in action at Black Bog and Garry Bog. We also welcomed six new peatland trainees who will be upskilled in this crucial area of work.

Restoring peatlands for nature and climate

This year, we carried out our most ambitious restoration project to date at Garry Bog Special Area of Conservation (SAC), near Ballymoney. More than 3,000 dams were installed across the site, restoring 100 hectares of precious peatland.

This achievement required considerable effort from our team and contractors to map drains and dams, mark them out, install them and get machines in and around the site safely. The results were immediate with areas remaining wet even during the dry spell in Spring 2025.

Likewise, drain blocking and bunding on Black Bog and Cranny Bogs has transformed these sites for the better and will have huge benefits for the habitats and the species they support.

A major threat to many of Northern Ireland's peatlands is encroaching conifers from neighbouring plantations that dry out the peat and encroach into and dominate the habitat. We've worked with landowners and Forest Service NI to control more than 120 hectares of impacted peatland habitats on Slieveanorra and Black Bog.

The Peatland Collaborative Network, which we act as coordinator for, continues to go from strength to strength delivering training for members and developing best practice guidance. In September, we delivered training for contractors in peatland restoration techniques in collaboration with the Crichton Carbon Centre at Haughey's Bog, Co Tyrone.

To support future restoration work, we've been using drones and survey equipment to collect aerial imagery, peat depth, and condition information from more than 3,000 hectares of peatland habitats. This will help make a huge contribution to Northern Ireland's peatland restoration targets.

A major highlight this year was the launch of our Peatland Restoration Traineeship Programme, funded by the Shared Island Initiative Peatlands Challenge Fund. Six trainees were recruited for a paid, one-year role and will be given the opportunity to learn new skills, shadow experienced staff and complete training in order to build capacity in this crucial area of delivery.

We also established our first single species transect to monitor the large heath butterfly at Black Bog and were excited to discover a new population of marsh fritillary in the south Sperrins.

Restoring blue carbon habitats and species

Our native oyster restoration efforts continued to gain momentum with the successful launch of our fourth oyster nursery in Carrickfergus. Each nursery acts as a mini marine ecosystem, and to date, over 180 additional species have been recorded thriving within them.

One of the most promising signs of success is the increasing presence of juvenile oysters, or 'spat', settling in the nurseries – an encouraging step towards rebuilding native oyster populations in the wild.

Earlier this year, we carried out an intertidal survey of Belfast Lough for wild native oysters. A remnant population discovered in 2020 was the original inspiration for launching the oyster reintroduction and population enhancement project. The team confirmed that the small wild population still exists, albeit in low numbers, offering a vital glimmer of hope for future regeneration.

In partnership with marine experts, we are finalising a predictive computer model to track where juvenile oysters are likely to move and establish. This model will help identify suitable locations for future restoration and support the growth of self-sustaining wild populations.

Community engagement remains at the heart of the project, with a new group of dedicated volunteers trained to support the Carrickfergus site. Volunteers also help carry out research projects which improves our understanding and enhances the project's impact.

We also participated in study visits across the UK and Ireland, sharing knowledge and exploring collaborative approaches to oyster restoration and broader marine habitat recovery.

The recent launch of DAERA's Blue Carbon Action Plan – the first of its kind in the UK – has been warmly welcomed. Recognising the critical role of habitats like oyster beds, saltmarsh and seagrass in climate resilience and biodiversity, we are proud to contribute to its delivery through active restoration projects.

Our fourth new oyster nursery at Carrickfergus



Native oysters (*Ostrea edulis*)

Diving into marine conservation – Chris Hamill’s journey

Chris Hamill, 21, has just completed a year-long placement with our Marine Team as part of his Marine Biology degree at Queen’s University Belfast. His experience has been hands-on, varied and deeply rewarding.



In my role, I’ve worked with volunteers across our native oyster nurseries, supported marine policy work, and engaged with coastal communities throughout Northern Ireland to raise awareness about the pressures facing our marine environment.

One of my main responsibilities was creating a colourful biodiversity guide, compiling the species found in and around our oyster baskets. This resource has become a great way to ‘show, not tell’ the positive impacts oyster restoration has on marine biodiversity – especially when working with volunteers and engaging the public.

My proudest moment came during a community engagement event at Steve Backshall’s seminar. Two children approached our stand and immediately recognised it from an event six months earlier. They could still recall the facts I’d shared about seashells and marine mammals. That moment really stuck with me – it showed that what we’re doing matters, and that it’s helping to inspire young people to connect with nature.

This Placement has opened doors I never expected. I had the chance to visit a seagrass and oyster restoration project in the western Highlands of Scotland and attend conferences in Belfast, Galway and London, learning from experienced conservationists and gaining real-world insight into the sector.

Working with the Marine Team at Ulster Wildlife is incredibly flexible. There’s always something happening, and you’re encouraged to shape your placement around the skills you want to develop, whether that’s species ID, understanding policy, or communicating science to the public. I’ve learned so much, and I’m hugely grateful for the experience.



Chris Hamill
Marine Team
Placement Student

Chris helping to monitor native oysters at our nurseries



Thank you for Bringing Nature Back

As we look back on the past year, Ulster Wildlife is full of gratitude for you – our dedicated members, generous donors, and passionate supporters. Your unwavering commitment is the heartbeat of our charity's mission to restore and protect the natural world.

Every membership renewed, every hour volunteered, every donation made is helping to bring nature back. Together, we're not just protecting nature; we're helping it thrive. Thank you for being such a vital part of this journey.

Thanks to thoughtful contributions from businesses, gifts in wills, and donations made in memory of loved ones we were able to restore precious habitats, protect threatened species, support education and acquire new land for conservation.

This year, as in years past, the support of our key funders has been essential in launching bold, long-term initiatives for nature's recovery – both on land and at sea.

As we look ahead, we're filled with hope and ambition. Together, we're building a wilder, more vibrant future – for nature, and for us all.

Members' Day guided walk



Members

Our members continue to be a powerful force for nature. While it was a more challenging year to bring in new supporters, the incredible loyalty of existing members made all the difference. Many chose to increase their regular gifts or responded generously to our Nests & Nooks appeal, helping us surpass our £10,000 target to protect red squirrels, barn owls and hedgehogs.

Member events and online winter talks remained popular, offering inspiration and connection throughout the seasons. Our AGM and Members' Day at Lough Neagh Discovery Centre was a thoroughly enjoyable day – an opportunity to reflect on our shared impact, explore the beautiful surroundings, and enjoy time together as a community. In the year ahead, we're excited to create even more ways for members to get closer to nature and drive positive change.

Ancient oak at Glenarm Nature Reserve



Gifts In Wills & In-Memory

In-memory gifts and gifts in wills have continued to play a vital role in supporting our mission to bring nature back. Over the past year, we received generous donations made in memory of loved ones, reflecting the deep personal connections our supporters have with nature. Gifts in wills provide long-term sustainability, allowing us to plan with confidence and deliver lasting impact. We are grateful for every future-focused gift, which ensures that the values and compassion of those of us who love wildlife live on. A heartening number of in-memory gifts were received from the family, friends and connections of our late CEO Jennifer Fulton who passed away suddenly in May 2024.

Gifts in wills contributed to our ability to purchase a brand-new nature reserve – Fedian in Co. Fermanagh. This site was will now be safeguarded as a haven for biodiversity, protecting some of our rarest species such as the marsh fritillary butterfly and red squirrels.

Black guillemot © Katy Bell



Funders

Statutory (government) funding and charitable trust funding help support some of our larger projects and areas of work, and are essential funding streams for many charities. Thank you to our funding partners for providing financial support for several specific projects over the past year.

Thanks to Ards and North Down Borough Council, Belfast City Council, Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Carrier Bag Levy, through the Environment Fund, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, Garfield Weston Foundation, Marine Institute, Ministry of Defence, National Lottery Community Fund, National Lottery Heritage Fund and Department of Communities, RSWT, Shared Island Initiative Peatlands Challenge Fund and Swire Charitable Trust.

Thank you to our supporters

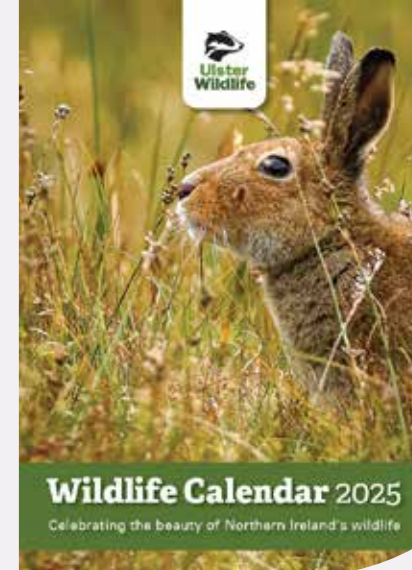


Irish stoat © Ronald Surgenor

Power NI volunteers clearing ragwort at Slievenacloy Nature Reserve



Front cover of our 2025 charity calendar



Businesses

Donations from businesses create meaningful social impact, supporting vital conservation efforts, and help to address urgent global challenges through delivering local programmes. Businesses working with Ulster Wildlife have benefited from increased employee pride and engagement and more trust with customers. Thank you to all of the businesses that contributed to a more sustainable and wilder future over the past year.

Thank you to Almac, Ardbarron Trust, Armoury Formal Wear, Artemis Technologies, Holiday Inn Belfast City Centre, IQ-EQ, Joules at The Boulevard, Re-Forest Nation plus donations from businesses via the Benevity Corporate Volunteering portal. With a special thank you to our corporate partners Power NI and Wilson Resources who contributed significantly to our species and oyster restoration work respectively.

Fundraising & Donations

As well as the wonderful contributions from members through their subscriptions, we also raise unrestricted income (income that is not committed to a specific project or piece of work) to enable us to deliver a wider range of work for nature.

This year we have raised funds through: Adopt an Animal; Let Nature In guides; Christmas card sales; 2025 Wildlife Calendar purchases; Big Wild Walk donations; a donation from the Dorinda Lady Dunleath Charitable Trust; additional donations with shop purchases and from members at time of renewal; donations from attendees at our own and external events. We would also like to thank the following organisations who made a donation in return for the delivery of talks from our staff/board: A&LGoodbody LLP, Armagh Natural History & Philosophical Society, Ballynahinch Wildlife Group, Bayburn Historical Society, Cookstown Wildlife Group, RSPB Coleraine, Shankill Parish Caring Association and Soroptimists of Lisburn & District.



Plans for the Future

With the bold and ambitious goals outlined in our Strategy to Bring Nature Back, we have a significant task ahead to restore and reverse the decline of nature. This year, we have made substantial progress across all strategy areas, laying a strong foundation to achieve our vision of a thriving natural world. We aim to inspire everyone to participate in nature's recovery, ensuring nature plays a crucial role in addressing both the nature and climate emergencies.

Forester moth © Simon Gray

In the year ahead, we are aiming to continue to work towards our three strategic outcomes:

Outcome 1: Nature is in recovery and wildlife is thriving across Northern Ireland

Outcome 2: More people are taking positive action for nature and climate and are benefitting from time spent in nature.

Outcome 3: Nature-based solutions are playing a central role in addressing climate change

With the Northern Ireland Assembly now back for over a year, we will be dedicating more resources to supporting the development of government policy and responding to a range of consultations. Key areas of activity will include the BovineTB Eradication Strategy, development of the new Farming with Nature agri-environment scheme, planning for future-proofing our Marine Protected Areas and the promotion of the '30 by 30' target. We will strengthen our engagement on the issue of poor water quality in Northern Ireland by working in partnership with other eNGOs. We are also aiming to expand our suite of nature reserves, with additional land purchase planned.

We will continue to support and empower local people to become agents of change to help address the climate and nature emergencies, with several new community organising and youth engagement projects in the pipeline. Young people and under-represented groups remaining at the forefront of our efforts which will be embedded in our forthcoming People Engagement Strategy. In addition, we will be relaunching our 'Let Nature In' wildlife gardening campaign, aiming to create wider impact through training and engagement with housing developers. Growing and strengthening our membership and supporter network is key to delivering on the ambition of our strategy, and we will continue to focus our efforts on engaging and inspiring new members and supporters from every part of society.

We will restore natural ecosystems at scale, expanding our peatland restoration work, develop new native oyster nurseries, and establish new partnership projects through PEACEPLUS funding to deliver innovative blue carbon habitat restoration such as seagrass. Together, these initiatives will provide long-term carbon sequestration and storage while also promoting diverse and resilient wildlife.

Internally, we'll be bringing in a range of new digital tools across the organisation to ensure we are upskilling our staff and making the most of available technology to drive efficiencies and impact for nature's recovery.

Financial Review at 31 March 2025

Ulster Wildlife’s financial position remained stable during the year and a modest surplus on unrestricted activities was achieved.

Sources of Income

Unrestricted income is revenue generated by the charity for its general purposes. It can be used at the discretion of the charity on any of the charity’s objects and a substantial component is donations from our members and supporters.

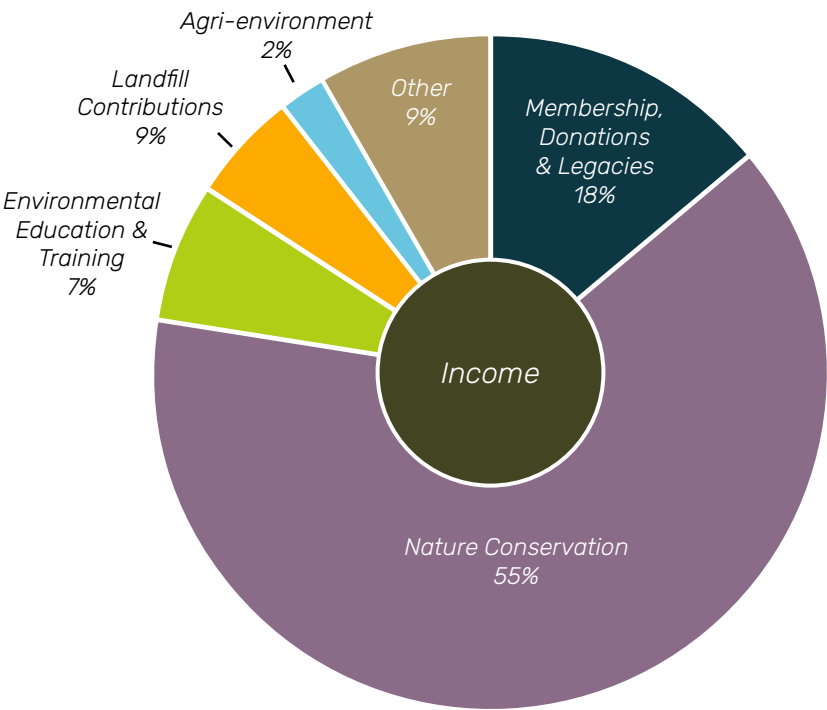
Unrestricted income is 33% higher than the previous year (+£249k). The main contributing factor was the reclassification of funds from restricted to unrestricted in the year.

Restricted income is income given to the charity for specific purposes. It may be a grant for a specific piece of conservation work or education activity or funds to be awarded as grants to third parties, in line with specific grant guidelines. Restricted income is 10% higher than last year (+£242k). Most of the increase relates to additional conservation activity funded by the DAERA Environment

Fund along with funding received from the Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts and the Heritage Lottery Fund for the purchase of our new nature reserve at Fedian. This is offset by the reclassification of activities noted above and a reduction in landfill communities funding as the landfill sites Ulster Wildlife work with closed during the year.

Ulster Wildlife’s restricted income has two main components, grants for specific conservation and education activity which is delivered by the charity; and Landfill Communities Funds where grants are awarded by the charity to third parties for purposes defined under the Landfill Communities Fund guidelines. Detail of the funders which contribute to our restricted projects and other sources of restricted income is outlined in Notes 4 – 8 of the Financial Statements.

Income	Unrestricted Funds £'000	Restricted Funds £'000	Total Funds £'000	Ratio
Membership, Donations & Legacies	476	50	526	18%
Nature Conservation	250	2,129	2,379	55%
Agri-environment payments	49	40	89	2%
Landfill Tax Contributions	-	196	196	9%
Environmental Education & Training	-	253	253	7%
Other Income	237	67	304	9%
Total Income	1,012	2,735	3,747	100%



Financial Review at 31 March 2025

How the Charity Spent its Resources

Overall expenditure was 46% higher in the year to 31 March 2025 than in the previous year (+£1.1m).

In line with the income split, a large part of the expenditure is on conservation and education activity.

Restricted projects make a contribution to core overhead costs for time and expenses incurred in running the projects.

After taking this contribution into account an unrestricted deficit of £16k was generated.

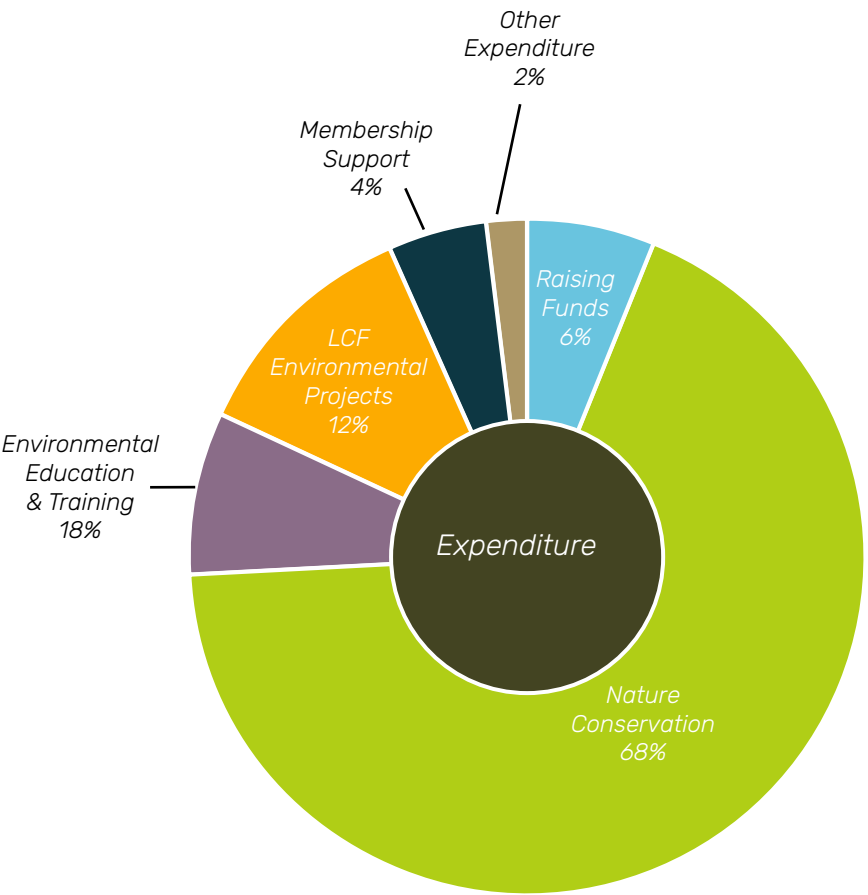
After expenditure on restricted projects, the 'surplus' on restricted funds amounted to £59k.

Income was received in the year for equipment and land which has been capitalised on the balance sheet, including the new nature reserve at Fedian. This surplus has been partly offset by a significant outflow of funds relating to Landfill Communities projects. Landfill Communities Fund income has reduced in the year as the Landfill sites which Ulster Wildlife distribute funds in relation to closed in the year, meanwhile expenditure on projects which completed continued spending out funds received in prior years.

Restricted financial reserves cannot be utilised by the charity, except for the very specific purposes set out by the funder. These financial reserves are therefore not available to fund either general working capital requirements or any unexpected events.

Expenditure	Total Funds £'000	Ratio
Raising Funds	233	6%
Nature Conservation	2,517	68%
Environmental Education & Training	287	8%
LCF Environmental Projects	430	12%
Membership Support	170	4%
Other Expenditure	67	2%
Total Expenditure	3,704	100%

Organisational support costs of £466k (Notes 10 & 11) have been allocated across the activities above on a proportional basis representing the resources expended to run all aspects of the charity.



Structure, Governance & Management

Ulster Wildlife Trust, (operating as Ulster Wildlife) is registered with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland (NIC101848) and is a not-for-profit company incorporated in Northern Ireland, limited by guarantee (NI 12711). It is an independent body, locally governed, affiliated to The Wildlife Trusts, a federated network of 46 charities across the UK.

The charity is governed by a Board of Trustees (Council) comprised of up to 17 members who serve up to a nine-year term. The Ulster Wildlife Council is responsible for making strategic decisions in relation to policy and procedure within Ulster Wildlife, while day-to-day operational decisions and management is delegated to the Chief Executive, who in turn oversees the staff team of Ulster Wildlife of which there were 45 at the end of March 2025.

All Board Members receive induction training in relation to their role, are provided with a Governance Handbook when they are appointed and adhere to the Code of Good Governance.

Ulster Wildlife also has an Honorary President, Joe Furphy, who does not have a voting or decision-making role on the Board but contributes to discussions and carries out representation for the Charity.

Details of serving Trustees during 2024/25 can be found below.

CHAIR  John Wittchell (Appointed on 07 December 2017, appointed Chair 30 September 2023.) F&A	VICE-CHAIR  Stephen Aston (Appointed on 07 December 2017, appointed Vice Chair on 27 September 2018) F & A	VICE-CHAIR  David Sterling (Appointed 16 October 2020, appointed Vice Chair 02 December 2021) E, F & A	HONORARY TREASURER  David Hendron (Appointed on 25 July 2018, appointed Treasurer on 27 September 2018) F & A	COMPANY SECRETARY  Catherine Thompson (Appointed on 14 March 2019, appointed Company Secretary on 18 March 2021) G
COUNCIL MEMBER  Anna Barclay (Appointed 24 November 2020 Resigned 19 March 2024.) G	COUNCIL MEMBER  Joe Breen (Appointed 9 June 2022. Passed away June 2024) E	COUNCIL MEMBER  Bob Brown (Appointed 16 October 2020) E	COUNCIL MEMBER  Richard Buchanan (Appointed 31 Oct 2023) F & E	COUNCIL MEMBER  Chloe Craig (Appointed 30 Nov 2023) E
COUNCIL MEMBER  Fiona Davey (Appointed on 19 November 2015. Resigned 28 September 2024) G	COUNCIL MEMBER  Ciarán Ferrin (Appointed 30 Nov 2023) G	COUNCIL MEMBER  Karen Hall (Co-opted 28 Nov 2024) G	COUNCIL MEMBER  Niall Marshall (Co-opted 28 Nov, 2024) F&A	COUNCIL MEMBER  Gillian McKee (Co-opted 28 Nov 2024) F
COUNCIL MEMBER  Seamus McKee (Appointed 18 March 2021) F	COUNCIL MEMBER  Orla Rafferty (Co-opted 28 Nov 2024) G	COUNCIL MEMBER  Nigel Scollan (Appointed 7 August 2024) E	COUNCIL MEMBER  Ed Wright (Appointed 07 October 2015. Resigned 28 September 2024)) F	HONORARY PRESIDENT  Joe Furphy



© Ronald Surgenor



Black Guillemot © Katy Bell



© Simon Gray

Changes to the Council during 2024/2025

Fiona Davy and Ed Wright stood down on 28 September 2024 having each served a nine-year term. Anna Barclay resigned on 4 July 2024. The Council is very saddened to hear of the passing of Joe Breen on 24 June 2024. The Council gives thanks to the members above for their valued and significant contribution to Ulster Wildlife.

The governance sub-structure comprises of four sub-committees: Governance, Finance & Audit, Environment and Fundraising. This governance framework is designed to ensure that we are an accountable, effective and efficient charity and to manage risk at the required level.

1. The Governance Committee (G) ensures that the Ulster Wildlife Council fulfils its legal, ethical and functional responsibilities through adequate governance policy development, skills audits, recruitment strategies for Council Members, training programmes, monitoring of Council activities and evaluation of Council's performance, human resources and health & safety management.

2. The Finance & Audit Committee (F&A) supports Council in ensuring that the effective governance of Ulster Wildlife is maintained in relation to: Financial and Physical Resources.

3. The Environment Committee (E) provides ongoing strategic input into the organisation's work linked to nature recovery and community action. The remit of this Committee encompasses nature reserves, environmental projects linked to habitats and/or species, and input into regional policy issues.

4. The Fundraising Committee (F) provides ongoing strategic input to the organisation's fundraising activities - with a focus on unrestricted fundraising.

Statement of Trustees' Responsibilities

The Trustees (who are also the Directors of Ulster Wildlife Trust) are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Annual Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and regulations.

Company and charity law requires the Directors to prepare financial statements for each financial year, which give a true and fair view of the state of the affairs of the charitable company and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the Directors are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently,
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities Statement of Recommended Practice,
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent,
- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements,
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charitable company will continue in operation.

The Trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the charity's transactions and disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and to enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Charities

Act 2008. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Provision of Information to Auditors

Each of the individuals who is a Trustee at the date of approval of this report confirms that:

- so far as they are aware, there is no relevant audit information of which the charity's auditor is unaware; and
- they have taken all the steps that they ought to have taken to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the charity's auditors are aware of that information.

Auditor

DNTCA Limited are deemed to be re-appointed under section 487(2) of the Companies Act 2006. This report was approved by the Board on 04 September 2025 and signed on its behalf by

John Wittchell
Chairman

David Hendron
Honorary Treasurer



Articles of Association

Ulster Wildlife's charitable objectives as set out in our Articles of Association are:

(1) The advancement of environmental protection and improvement, in particular the conservation of all aspects of Northern Ireland and its adjacent areas' wildlife, biodiversity, geodiversity and associated natural beauty for the benefit of present and future generations by:

(a) safeguarding, maintaining and enhancing natural biodiversity and geodiversity through the management of nature reserves (however entitled or however established);

(b) practising, advocating, encouraging, influencing, advising and campaigning for best conservation practice involving land, sea and freshwater management practice in ways that favour biodiversity, geodiversity, ecosystem health, sustainable use of natural resources and sustainable development;

(c) undertaking action, independently or in partnership, to protect threatened habitats, sites of geodiversity or heritage significance, at local, national or international levels on or in water, land and adjacent seas;

(d) taking account of other aspects of the natural heritage on which wildlife is dependent or to which it contributes, including landforms and landscapes;

(e) improving the quality of life of people through supporting a biodiversity, ecosystem, geodiversity and sustainability led approach to the management and design of the natural and built environment.

(2) The advancement of education by raising the public's awareness and knowledge of all aspects of the natural and built heritage, biodiversity and geodiversity of Northern Ireland and its adjacent areas by promoting, undertaking and co-operating in research and gathering and sharing information on these topics.

(3) The advancement of citizenship through volunteering linked to natural heritage including the promotion of sustainable food production and sustainable lifestyles.

(4) The advancement of the arts, culture, heritage and science linked to natural heritage through events and project-based action.

(5) The advancement of health and well-being through activities linked to the natural environment.

Green Hairstreak © Katy Bell

Key Policies & Processes

Managing Risk

Ulster Wildlife Trustees are responsible for overseeing risk management by the charity. They are responsible for ensuring that Ulster Wildlife has an effective system of internal control, management and audit to enable the charity to take advantage of opportunities whilst ensuring that the charity remains protected. Risk management is well established and is considered in every aspect of our work. We have an active risk management process in place to make sure that appropriate risk assessments are completed and controls are in place to manage and mitigate risk across the organisation.

The Board of Trustees and Senior Leadership Team work together to ensure that risk is very carefully assessed in relation to the health, welfare and safety of staff, volunteers and the public. Health & safety risk management is also supported by a qualified external consultant. Risks are also reviewed in the broadest sense and anything that might alter or impact on the charity's ability to fulfill its charitable objectives is considered regularly through the governance processes.

Processes include:

- Risk assessments are completed by all staff to identify, evaluate and manage risks.
- Health & Safety management system including phone app is used to facilitate management and record key information.
- Risk register with mitigation actions is reviewed at least quarterly by the Board.
- Health & Safety is a key factor in selecting external contractors and Health & Safety obligations are included in awarded external contracts.
- Comprehensive risk management reviews are carried out once a year by all subcommittees and are reported to the Board Meeting.
- Multi-year planning, with targets that are linked to delivery of organisational strategy.
- 'Value for Money' principles guide when and where we source goods and services.
- Annual external audit.

The most significant risks identified in 2024/25 were:

- Staff retention and recruitment.
- Staffing gaps to be managed including recruitment of a new Chief Executive.
- Managing the influx of government policies and consultations due to the return of the NI Executive.

Cost of living crisis and inflationary increases were actively managed during the year. A membership growth plan and associated staffing structure has been put into place in an effort to return to membership growth over the coming years.

Staff turnover increased during the year from 17% in 2023.24 to 31% in 2024.25, with one third of the leavers in 2024.25 due to short term contracts coming to an end. Government funding was agreed in summer 2023, with five-year agreements now in place through the DAERA Environment Fund.

Existing senior staff 'acted up' into the CEO role during the period of May 2024 to October 2024 and a successful recruitment exercise was carried out to appoint the new CEO, who started in November 2024.

The return of the NI Assembly in February did lead to a significant increase in staff time dedicated to engagement in a range of policy and legislative issues. The Board are considering this in terms of a forward resourcing plan.

The most significant risks identified for 2025/26 are:

- Staff movements and increased recruitment due to a significant number of new projects coming on board.
- Need for significantly enhanced cashflow management due to the scale and number of new projects coming on board – needing an increase in available working capital.
- Continued need for increased staff capacity to engage meaningfully in government policy and legislative issues.



Red squirrel © Simon Gray

Equal Opportunities and Diversity

Ulster Wildlife aims to be an employer of choice, for people from different backgrounds, and through our Equality in the Workplace policy we promote respect for the individual and equality of opportunity.

Our aim is for our workforce to be truly representative of all sections of the wider community and for each employee to feel respected and able to give their best. Within Ulster Wildlife there is respect for promotion and protection of each individual's human rights. Ulster Wildlife promotes being at ease with all aspects of diversity, built on fairness and respect for all. Decisions about recruitment and selection, promotion, training or any other benefit are made objectively and without discrimination.

Our Equality in the Workplace policy helps all those who work for us to develop their full potential and ensure that the talents and resources of the workforce are utilised to fully maximise the efficiency of the organisation.

Sustainability

We have set a target to achieve net zero emissions by 2030 and we take sustainability very seriously. We have already commenced the net zero journey, which will be an integral part of our organisational and project planning. All electricity used is renewable and we have started phasing in EVs as budget allows. During the project development phase for new projects, carbon footprint and location of project staff is considered, as by the nature of our work, our activities are dispersed throughout Northern Ireland.

A priority for Northern Ireland in terms of the regional carbon budget is to restore damaged peatland and this is a significant delivery strand for the charity. We are also increasing our work in the area of 'blue carbon' habitat restoration. We are beginning work to develop a 'Pathway to Net Zero' plan for the charity.

Wider network

Ulster Wildlife is part of a collective of 46 Wildlife Trusts, represented nationally by The Royal Society for Wildlife Trusts (RSWT). The Wildlife Trusts collectively act together, where appropriate, in key policy areas and campaigns.

Financial Management

Financial Reserves Policy

The Trustees recognise there is a balance to be achieved between delivering our charitable objectives and managing the actual and potential risks of failing to meet our liabilities when they fall due. Consequently, the Trustees plan to hold a level of unrestricted financial reserves to provide the necessary resilience to manage these risks.

These risks include, amongst others:

- Loss of funding sources
- Funding delays
- Costs associated with unforeseen closure

The Trustees, having assessed the likelihood of these risks occurring, consider that an unrestricted financial reserve level (excluding designated funds) equal to six months unrestricted payroll and support costs and potential winding up costs should be targeted. This amounts to around £1.2m for the year to 31 March 2025 as permanent staff numbers have increased. The balance on unrestricted reserves as of 31 March 2025, net of unrestricted fixed assets is £811k which would cover potential winding up costs and 4 months of payroll for permanent positions and support costs.

Designated Funds

In addition to the above, the Trustees have designated certain unrestricted funds as the 'Fund for the Future'. This money is earmarked to help further the charity's strategic objectives, delivering long term strategic change and this includes the acquisition of new nature reserves.

Monitoring and Reviewing

Financial reserve levels are monitored on a quarterly basis throughout the year as a standing item on the Finance Committee's agenda. They also form a part of the financial information presented to the Board on a quarterly basis.

Our Promise to Our Supporters

At Ulster Wildlife our members, supporters and funders are at the heart of everything we do to help wildlife and wild places thrive. That is why, as a registered charity (NIC101848), we are part of the Fundraising Regulator's self-regulatory scheme.

As members of the scheme, we follow the Institute of Fundraising's Codes of Fundraising Practice and comply with the key principles embodied in the Codes. This means when supporters make a donation to us they can be assured that our fundraising is legal, open, honest and respectful.

Our Fundraising Promise



We are committed to high standards.

- We do all we can to ensure that staff, fundraisers, volunteers and fundraising contractors working with us to raise funds comply with the Code and with this Promise.
- We comply with the law including those that apply to data protection, health and safety and the environment.

We are honest and open.

- We tell the truth and do not exaggerate; we do what we say we are going to do.
- We answer all reasonable questions about our fundraising activities and costs.
- We are clear about who we are, what we do and how donations are used.
- Where we have a promotional agreement with a commercial company, we make clear how much of the purchase price we receive.
- We give a clear explanation of how a donation can be made and how to amend a regular commitment.

We are respectful.

- We respect the rights, dignities and privacy of our supporters and beneficiaries.
- We will not put undue pressure on anyone to make a gift, and if a person does not want to give or wishes to cease giving, we will respect that decision.
- If someone tells us that they don't want us to contact them in a particular way, we will not do so – our Privacy Notice for Members and Supporters is available on our website at ulsterwildlife.org/privacy-notice

We are accountable.

- If anyone is unhappy with anything we have done whilst fundraising, they can contact us to make a complaint at complaints@ulsterwildlife.org. For further information, read our complaints policy.
- If we cannot resolve a complaint, we accept the authority of the Fundraising Regulator to make a final adjudication.



Storm petrel © Ronald Surgenor

Advisors, Senior Personnel and Administrative Details

Auditors

DNT Chartered Accountants
Ormeau House
91-97 Ormeau Road
Belfast
BT7 1SH

Bankers

Danske Bank
Belfast Finance Centre
PO Box 183
Donegall Square West
Belfast
BT1 6JS

Solicitors

Edwards & Co.,
28 Hill Street,
Belfast
BT1 2LA

Company Secretary

Catherine Thompson

Senior Leadership Team

Jennifer Fulton - Chief Executive Officer
Dawn Miskelly - Director of Development and Governance
Peter McEvoy - Director of Land Management

Charity Registration Number

NIC 101848

Company Registration Number

NI12711

Registered Office and Operational Address

McClelland House
10 Heron Road
Belfast
BT3 9LE

Independent Auditors' Report to the Members of the Ulster Wildlife Trust

Opinion

We have audited the charity financial statements of Ulster Wildlife Trust ('the charity') for the financial year ended 31 March 2024 which comprise the Statement of Financial Activities (incorporating an Income and Expenditure Account), the Balance Sheet, the Statement of Cash Flows and notes to the financial statements, including the summary of significant accounting policies set out in note 2. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including FRS 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland" and Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with FRS 102.

In our opinion when reporting in accordance with a fair presentation framework the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the charity's affairs as at 31 March 2024 and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice;
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the charity in accordance with ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled

our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the charity's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from the date when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the trustees with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

Other information

The other information comprises the information included in the annual report other than the financial statements and our Auditor's Report thereon. The trustees are responsible for the other information contained within the annual report. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

Our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the course of the audit, or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether this gives rise to a material

misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact. We have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinion on other matter prescribed by the Companies Act 2006

In our opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit:

- the information given in the Trustees Annual Report for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements; and
- the Trustees Annual Report has been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

In the light of the knowledge and understanding of the charity and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified material misstatements in the Trustees Annual Report.

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the Companies Act 2006 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept; or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- certain disclosures of trustees' remuneration specified by law are not made.



Independent Auditors' Report to the Members of the Ulster Wildlife Trust

Responsibilities of trustees for the financial statements

As explained more fully in the Statement of Trustees' Responsibilities, the trustees are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as they determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the trustees are responsible for assessing the charity's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless management either intends to liquidate the charity or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an Auditor's Report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We design procedures in line with our responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of irregularities, including fraud. The extent to which our procedures are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud is detailed below:

Our approach to identifying and assessing the risks of material misstatement in respect of irregularities, including fraud and non compliance with laws and regulations, was as follows:

- The engagement partner ensured that the engagement team collectively had the appropriate competence, capabilities and skills to identify or recognise non-compliance with applicable laws and regulations;
- We identified the laws and regulations applicable to the company through discussions with directors and other management,
- We focused on specific laws and regulations which we considered may have a direct material effect on the financial statements or the operations of the company,

To address the risk of fraud through management bias and override of controls, we:

- Performed analytical procedures to identify any unusual or unexpected relationships;
- Investigated the rationale behind significant or unusual transactions;
- Tested journal entries to identify unusual transactions;
- Assessed whether judgements and assumptions made in determining the accounting estimates were indicative of potential bias.

In response to the risk of irregularities and non-compliance with laws and regulations, we designed procedures which included, but were not limited to:

- Agreeing financial statement disclosures to underlying supporting documentation;

Black guillemots © Ronald Surgenor

Independent Auditors' Report to the Members of the Ulster Wildlife Trust

- Reading the minutes of meetings of those charged with governance;
- Enquiring of management as to actual and potential litigation and claims;
- Reviewing correspondence with HMRC, Companies House and the company's legal advisors.

There are inherent limitations in our audit procedures described above. The more removed that laws and regulations are from financial transactions, the less likely it is that we would become aware of non-compliance. Auditing standards also limit the audit procedures required to identify non-compliance with laws and regulations to enquiry of the directors and other management and the inspection of regulatory and legal correspondence, if any.

Material misstatements that arise due to fraud can be harder to detect than those that arise from error as they may involve deliberate concealment or collusion.

A further description of our responsibilities is available on the Financial Reporting Council's website at: www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of our auditor's report.

Further information regarding the scope of our responsibilities as auditor

As part of an audit in accordance with ISAs (UK), we exercise professional judgement and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting

from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.

- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the charity's internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by trustees.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of the trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the charity's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our Auditor's Report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our Auditor's Report. However, future events or conditions may cause the charity to cease to continue as a going concern.
- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

The purpose of our audit work and to whom we owe our responsibilities

This report is made solely to the charity's members, as a body, in accordance with Chapter 3 of Part 16 of the Companies Act 2006. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charity's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charity and the charity's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.



Mr M Nangle (Senior Statutory Auditor) for and on behalf of **DNTCA Limited, Ormeau House, 91-97 Ormeau Road, Belfast, BT7 1SH.**

Statement of Financial Activities (including income and expenditure account) for the year ended 31 March 2025

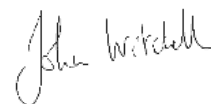
	Notes	Unrestricted Fund £	Restricted Fund £	2025 Total Funds £	2024 Total Funds £
INCOME FROM:					
Donations & Legacies	3	475,847	49,572	525,419	595,265
Conservation Activities	4	249,813	2,129,497	2,379,310	1,793,700
Agri-environment Payments		49,165	39,705	88,870	53,221
Charitable Activities - Landfill Contributions	5	-	196,385	196,385	299,134
Education & Training Activities	6	-	253,072	253,072	230,002
Interest Received	7	22,631	9,512	32,143	25,884
Other Income	8	214,632	57,415	272,047	258,481
TOTAL INCOME		1,012,088	2,735,158	3,747,246	3,255,687
EXPENDITURE ON					
Raising Funds	9	199,921	-	199,921	144,790
Charitable Activities	10	1,035,291	2,468,886	3,504,177	2,394,983
TOTAL EXPENDITURE		1,235,212	2,468,886	3,704,098	2,539,773
NET INCOME BEFORE TRANSFERS AND FOREIGN EXCHANGE					
		(223,124)	266,272	43,148	715,914
Gains/(losses) from Foreign Exchange		(166)	-	(166)	(6,300)
Transfers Between Funds	14	207,277	(207,277)	-	-
NET MOVEMENT IN FUNDS		57,095	652,519	709,614	523,575
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS:					
Total Funds at 1 April 2024		1,255,832	2,642,063	3,897,895	3,188,281
Transfer (from)/to Designated Fund for the Future		34,719	(34,719)	-	-
TOTAL FUNDS AT 31 MARCH 2025		1,274,538	2,666,339	3,940,877	3,897,895

The notes on pages 40 to 43 form part of these financial statements.
The Statement of financial activities includes all gains and losses in the year.
All income and expenditure derives from continuing activities.

Statement of Financial Position at 31 March 2025

	Notes	Unrestricted Fund £	Restricted Fund £	2025 Total Funds £	2024 Total Funds £
FIXED ASSETS					
Tangible Assets	16	299,131	1,886,558	2,185,689	1,858,215
CURRENT ASSETS					
Debtors	17	295,591	853,153	1,148,744	535,645
Cash at Bank and in Hand		852,630	433,061	1,285,691	2,180,777
		1,148,221	1,286,214	2,434,435	2,716,422
CURRENT LIABILITIES					
Creditors	18	165,378	163,617	328,995	326,490
NET CURRENT ASSETS		982,843	1,122,597	2,105,440	2,389,932
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES		1,281,974	3,009,155	4,291,129	4,248,147
CREDITORS due in more than 1 year					
Capital Grants	19	7,436	342,816	350,252	350,252
		1,274,538	2,666,339	3,940,877	3,897,895
FINANCIAL RESERVES					
General Fund	20	1,109,844	-	1,109,844	1,046,346
Fund for the Future	22	164,694	-	164,694	209,486
Restricted Funds	21	-	2,666,339	2,666,339	2,642,063
		1,274,538	2,666,339	3,940,877	3,897,895

These financial statements were approved and signed by the members of the Board and authorised for issue on 29th August 2025



John Witchell, Chair



David Henrion, Honorary Treasurer

The notes on pages 40 to 43 form part of these financial statements.
Company Registration Number: NI 12711

Statement of Cash Flows for year ending 31 March 2025

	2025	2024
	£	£
Cash Flows from operating activities		
Net Income/(Expenditure)	43,148	715,914
<i>Adjustments for</i>		
Depreciation of Tangible Fixed Assets	46,867	41,152
Increase/(Decrease) in Deferred Capital Grant	-	(671)
(Increase)/Decrease in Trade and Other Debtors	(613,099)	(308,839)
Increase/(Decrease) in Trade and Other Creditors	2,505	(264,741)
Net Cash (used in)/from Operating Activities	(520,579)	182,815
Cash Flows from Investing Activities		
Purchase of Tangible Assets	(374,341)	(72,626)
Disposal of Tangible Assets	-	-
Net Cash used in Investing Activities	(374,341)	(72,626)
Net Increase /(Decrease) in Cash and Cash Equivalents	(894,920)	110,190
Cash and Cash Equivalents at Beginning of the Year	2,180,777	2,076,888
Net Increase/(Decrease) in Cash and Cash Equivalents due to Exchange Rate Movements	(166)	(6,300)
Cash and Cash Equivalents at End of the Year	1,285,691	2,180,777

Notes to the accounts

1 Statement of Compliance

These financial statements have been prepared in compliance with FRS102, 'The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and the Republic of Ireland', 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 (Charities SORP (FRS102)) and the Charities Act 2008.

2 Accounting Policies

Basis of preparation

The financial statements have been prepared on the historical cost basis, as modified by the revaluation of certain financial assets and liabilities measured at fair value through income or expenditure.

The financial statements are prepared in sterling, which is the functional currency of the entity.

Going concern

There are no material uncertainties about the charity's ability to continue.

Fund accounting

Unrestricted funds are available for use, at the discretion of the trustees, to further any of the charity's purposes.

Restricted funds are subject to restrictions on their expenditure declared by the donor or funder or through the terms of an appeal.

Incoming resources

All incoming resources are included in the statement of financial activities when entitlement has passed to the charity; it is probable that the economic benefits associated with the transaction will flow to the charity and the amount can be reliably measured. The following specific policies are applied to particular categories of income:

- income from donations or grants is recognised when there is evidence of entitlement to the gift, receipt is probable and its amount can be measured reliably.
- legacy income is recognised when receipt is probable and entitlement is established.
- income from contracts for the supply of services is recognised with the delivery of the contracted service.

These are classified as unrestricted funds unless there is a contractual requirement for it to be spent on a particular purpose and returned if unspent, in which case it is regarded as restricted.

Resources expended

Expenditure is recognised on an accruals basis as a liability is incurred. Expenditure is classified under headings of the statement of financial activities to which it relates:

- expenditure on raising funds includes the costs of all fundraising activities.

- expenditure on charitable activities includes all costs incurred by the charity in undertaking activities that further its charitable aims for the benefit of its beneficiaries, including those support costs and costs relating to the governance of the charity.

All costs are allocated to expenditure categories reflecting the use of the resource. Direct costs attributable to a single activity are allocated directly to that activity. Shared costs are apportioned between the activities they contribute to on a reasonable, justifiable and consistent basis.

Depreciation

Purchased assets, which individually exceed £5000 at cost are included in the balance sheet at historic cost less depreciation and any impairment in accordance with FRS 102.

Fixed Assets are depreciated over the period of their useful lives as follows:

Land	not depreciated
Buildings	2.5% straight line
Equipment	10% straight line
Computers	25% straight line
Vehicles - cars and vans	15% straight line

Depreciation for specialist conservation equipment with limited resale value would normally be depreciated over the lifetime of the project in which they are used.

Grants

Government and other grants are recognised at the fair value of the asset received or receivable. Grants are not recognised until there is reasonable assurance that the charity will comply with the conditions attaching to them and the grants will be received.

Foreign currency

Transactions in foreign currencies are translated at rates prevailing at the date of the transaction.

Pensions

Ulster Wildlife operates a defined contribution pension scheme and matches employee contributions to the scheme at a maximum rate of 9% of salary.

Taxation

The organisation is a registered charity with HMRC and is therefore not liable for taxation to the extent that any surplus or gains arising are wholly applied to its charitable objects.

The company is registered for VAT. Much of the income is either exempt or outside the scope of VAT.

Consequently, it is not possible to recover most of the VAT incurred on expenditure. Income and expenditure are shown exclusive of recoverable VAT.

Notes to the accounts

3 Donations & Legacies

	Unrestricted Funds 2025 £	Restricted Funds 2025 £	Total Funds 2025 £	Total Funds 2024 £
Legacy & In Memory Giving	2,313	2,640	4,953	97,926
Membership Contributions inc. Gift Aid	454,106	-	454,106	428,802
Corporate Support	8,697	39,868	48,565	49,049
Other Gifts & Donations	10,731	7,064	17,795	19,488
	475,847	49,572	525,419	595,265

4 Conservation Grants

	Unrestricted Funds 2025 £	Restricted Funds 2025 £	Total Funds 2025 £	Total Funds 2024 £
DAERA Environment Fund	-	1,594,485	1,594,485	946,401
DAERA Marine Environment and Fisheries Fund	-	28,028	28,028	4,953
Environmental Farming Scheme	249,813	-	249,813	218,269
Esmée Fairbairn Foundation	-	122,265	122,265	128,919
EU- Interreg VA	-	-	-	211,516
Garfield Weston Foundation	-	25,000	25,000	-
Landfill Communities Fund	-	20,000	20,000	10,450
Marine Institute	-	2,435	2,435	2,507
Ministry of Defence	-	22,550	22,550	20,685
National Lottery Heritage Fund	-	150,400	150,400	-
Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts	-	100,900	100,900	200,000
Shared Island Initiative	-	13,434	13,434	-
Swire Charitable Trust	-	50,000	50,000	50,000
	249,813	2,129,497	2,379,310	1,793,700

5 Landfill Environmental Projects

	Unrestricted Funds 2025 £	Restricted Funds 2025 £	Total Funds 2025 £	Total Funds 2024 £
Landfill Contributions Received	-	196,385	196,385	299,134
	-	196,385	196,385	299,134
<u>Expenditure</u>				
Entrust Administration Fee	-	5,706	5,706	10,111
Direct Project Expenditure	-	407,196	407,196	194,251
Direct Costs	16,833	-	16,833	26,288
	16,833	412,902	429,735	230,650

Notes to the accounts

6 Education & Training Grants

	Unrestricted Funds 2025 £	Restricted Funds 2025 £	Total Funds 2025 £	Total Funds 2024 £
Department for Communities (Job Start Scheme)	-	43,109	43,109	-
Department for Communities (Covid Recovery Employment and Skills Initiative for Heritage)	-	-	-	35,399
Education Authority	-	-	-	(2,688)
National Lottery Community Fund (People & Communities)	-	82,092	82,092	60,520
National Lottery Community Fund (Empowering Young People 3)	-	63,620	63,620	60,863
National Lottery Heritage Fund (NextDoor Nature)	-	45,523	45,523	45,172
National Lottery Heritage Fund (New to Nature)	-	11,703	11,703	29,737
Belfast City Council	-	7,025	7,025	999
	-	253,072	253,072	230,002

7 Interest Received

Interest received in Restricted Funds is the interest earned on landfill tax receipts held prior to disbursement, and interest received which is used to fund expenditure on nature reserves. Interest received in unrestricted funds is bank interest earned on other cash balances.

8 Other Income

	Unrestricted Funds 2025 £	Restricted Funds 2025 £	Total Funds 2025 £	Total Funds 2024 £
Esmée Fairbairn Foundation Core Funding	75,000	-	75,000	75,000
Consultancy	23,589	-	23,589	28,786
Conacre	34,045	-	34,045	34,084
Environmental Farming Scheme Plans	42,500	54,500	97,000	-
Sundry income	39,498	2,915	42,413	120,611
	214,632	57,415	272,047	258,481

9 Expenditure on Raising Donations & Legacies

	Unrestricted Funds 2025 £	Restricted Funds 2025 £	Total Funds 2025 £	Total Funds 2024 £
Wages & Salary Costs	177,591	-	177,591	127,269
Other Costs including printed materials	22,330	-	22,330	17,521
	199,921	-	199,921	144,790

* Increase in salary costs related to planned restructure in the membership team to grow income in future years.

Notes to the accounts

10 Charitable Activities

	Unrestricted Funds 2025 £	Restricted Funds 2025 £	Total Funds 2025 £	Total Funds 2024 £
Landfill Environmental Projects	16,833	412,902	429,735	230,650
Nature Conservation	375,945	1,782,727	2,158,672	1,396,047
Environmental Education & Training	69,564	176,777	246,341	244,998
Membership Support Costs	145,805	-	145,805	109,578
Organisation Support Costs	401,449	64,549	465,998	363,807
Depreciation	14,936	31,931	46,867	40,482
Bank Interest & Charges	5,936	-	5,936	5,085
Auditors Remuneration	4,823	-	4,823	4,336
	1,035,291	2,468,886	3,504,177	2,394,983

11 Expenditure on Charitable Activities

	Staff Costs £	Other direct costs £	2025 £	2024 £
Landfill Environmental Projects	14,405	415,330	429,735	230,650
Nature Conservation	1,048,073	1,110,598	2,158,672	1,396,047
Environmental Education	209,993	36,348	246,341	244,998
Membership Support Costs	63,152	82,653	145,805	109,579
Organisation Support Costs	239,597	226,402	465,998	363,806
Other - Depreciation, Bank Charges, Audit	-	57,626	57,626	49,903
	1,575,220	1,928,957	3,504,177	2,394,983

Other Direct costs	Landfill Environmental Projects	Nature Conservation Projects	Environmental Education Projects	Membership & Organisation Support Costs	Total 2025
	£	£	£	£	£
Direct Project Costs	412,902	135,646	19,083	38,631	606,262
Premises Costs	2,357	55,441	3,592	55,858	117,248
Postage, Printing & Stationery	-	11,287	15	53,880	65,182
Staff Travel and Vehicle Costs	71	55,473	1,437	12,623	69,604
Contracted Services	-	800,690	7,135	94,625	902,450
Staff Training	-	24,539	2,277	5,100	31,916
Council Costs	-	-	-	6,807	6,807
Information Technology	-	27,522	2,809	41,531	71,862
	415,330	1,110,598	36,348	309,055	1,871,331

Notes to the accounts

12 Depreciation

	Unrestricted Funds 2025 £	Restricted Funds 2025 £	Total Funds 2025 £	Total Funds 2024 £
Motor Vehicles	1,038	20,930	21,968	17,786
Equipment	5,653	11,001	16,654	14,451
Buildings	8,245	-	8,245	8,245
	14,936	31,931	46,867	40,482

13 Staff Costs

	2025 £	2024 £
Salaries and Wages	1,491,096	1,220,458
Social Security Costs	139,757	109,549
Pension Contributions	121,958	87,090
	1,752,811	1,417,097

One employee received emoluments of more than £60,000. The average number of employees during the year, calculated on the basis of full time equivalents, was 44.3 (2024- 37.9).

The key management personnel comprise the trustees and the members of the senior management team.

The total employee benefits of the key management personnel was £171,149. (2024: £202,497).

14 Transfer Between Funds

	2025 £	2024 £
Landfill Fund Administration Costs	21,329	26,288
Project Contribution to Organisation Support Costs	238,703	134,439
Match Funding for Projects	(52,755)	(9,160)
	207,277	151,567

15 Board Remuneration and Related Party Transactions

No members of the Board received any remuneration during the year in their capacity as Trustees.

No travel and subsistence costs were paid on behalf of trustees during the year. (2024 £NIL).

No travel and subsistence costs were paid to trustees during the year. (2024 £NIL).

No trustees received payment for professional services supplied to the charity (2024 £NIL).

No balances are owed to trustees at 31st March 2025.

Notes to the accounts

16 Fixed Assets

	Nature Reserves £	Land & Buildings £	Motor Vehicles £	Equipment & Computers £	TOTAL £
COST OR VALUATION					
At 1 April 2024	1,240,158	589,355	221,401	181,883	2,232,797
Additions	293,783	-	-	80,558	374,341
Disposals	-	-	-	-	-
At 31 March 2025	1,533,941	589,355	221,401	262,441	2,607,138
DEPRECIATION					
At 1 April 2024	-	181,775	118,844	73,963	374,582
Charge for year	-	8,245	21,969	16,653	46,867
Disposals	-	-	-	-	-
At 31 March 2025	-	190,020	140,813	90,616	421,449
NBV at 31 March 2025	1,533,941	399,335	80,588	171,825	2,185,689
including restricted assets of	1,493,941	150,000	80,588	162,029	1,886,558

Glendun farm has been included at probate value of £150,000.

17 Debtors

	Unrestricted Funds 2025 £	Restricted Funds 2025 £	Total Funds 2025 £	Total Funds 2024 £
Debtors and Prepayments	273,571	14,921	288,492	297,720
Grants	-	838,232	838,232	218,883
Tax Refunds Due	22,020	-	22,020	19,042
	295,591	853,153	1,148,744	535,645

18 Creditors Falling Due Within One Year

	Unrestricted Funds 2025 £	Restricted Funds 2025 £	Total Funds 2025 £	Total Funds 2024 £
Sundry Creditors and Accrued Expenditure	165,378	163,617	328,995	326,490

19 Creditors Falling Due After More Than One Year

	Unrestricted Funds 2024 £	Restricted Funds 2024 £	Unrestricted Funds 2023 £	Restricted Funds 2023 £
Capital Grants	7,436	342,816	350,252	350,252

Notes to the accounts

20 Movement on Unrestricted Funds

		Unrestricted Funds 2025 £	Unrestricted Funds 2024 £
Opening Balance		1,046,346	989,251
(Deficit)/surplus for the Year		(16,013)	57,095
Reclassification of funds restricted to unrestricted		34,719	-
Movement on Designated Fund for the Future	21	44,792	-
Closing Balance		1,109,844	1,046,346

21 Movement on Designated Fund for the Future

	Designated Funds for the Future 2025 £	Resignated Funds for the Future 2024 £
Opening Balance	209,486	209,486
Transfer from Donations and Legacies	2,313	-
UW Contribution to the Purchase of Land	(47,105)	-
Closing Balance	164,694	209,486

Some funders pay in advance and other funders issue payment only after the expenditure has been incurred. The movement on restricted funds in any year is a result of timing differences between receipts of grants for restricted projects and the related expenditure.

22 Movement on Fund for the Future

	Restricted Funds 2025 £	Restricted Funds 2024 £
Opening Balance	2,642,063	1,989,544
Net Income/(Expenditure) for the year	58,995	652,519
Reclassification of funds restricted to unrestricted	(34,719)	-
Closing Balance	2,666,339	2,642,063

Fund for the Future includes monies from gifts in wills and legacy donations and other donations, including restricted donations. It will be used to purchase and manage nature reserves, protect key species as well as educate and support future wildlife champions.

23 Contingent Liability

A portion of grants received may become repayable if the charity fails to comply with the terms of the relevant letters of offer.

24 Taxation

As a charity, Ulster Wildlife Trust is exempt from tax on income and gains to the extent that these are applied to its charitable objects. Ulster Wildlife is registered for VAT in relation to some specific taxable supplies. The net amount payable on taxable supplies was £19,665 in the period (2024 £17,525).

25 Company Status

Ulster Wildlife Trust Limited is a private company limited by guarantee and consequently does not have share capital. Each of the members is liable to contribute an amount not exceeding £1 towards the assets of the company in the event of liquidation.



Badger © Ronald Surgenor



Ulster Wildlife is Northern Ireland's largest local nature conservation charity. We are working to bring nature back across Northern Ireland and secure a wilder future where people and nature are thriving together.

Join now and together we can make a real difference
www.ulsterwildlife.org/join

Get in touch

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-  facebook.com/ulsterwildlife
-  instagram.com/ulsterwildlife
-  linkedin.com/company/ulster-wildlife

We are proud to be one of **46 independent Wildlife Trusts** working across the UK

part of



Ulster Wildlife Trust, (operating as Ulster Wildlife) is registered with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland NIC101848 and is a not-for-profit company incorporated in Northern Ireland, limited by guarantee NI 12711.

Accounts

Our Year for Nature, People and Climate

Ulster Wildlife Trust

Annual Report & Accounts 23-24



**Ulster
Wildlife**



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Foreword

As we reflect on the year April 2023 to March 2024, we do so with a sense of pride for all that has been achieved in turning the tide from nature loss to recovery and driving meaningful action for people and climate.

Forging ahead with our Strategy to 2030, we have made significant progress against our ambitious goals and transformations under the leadership of our late CEO Jennifer Fulton, who sadly passed away in May 2024. From addressing climate change through nature-based solutions and supporting farmers to deliver for wildlife, to community-based action for wildlife on the ground, we have played a leading role in ensuring the value of nature is recognised and action is taken for it to recover. Jennifer's legacy will continue to live on in the many initiatives she spearheaded to help nature recover. More recently, we were saddened at the passing of board member Joe Breen after a short illness. We pay tribute to Joe for his marine expertise and guidance – he will be sorely missed by us all. A full tribute to Jennifer and Joe can be found on page 4.

Landscape-scale recovery reached new heights as our peatland restoration work and team expanded during the year, enabling us to restore more of these precious habitats across Northern Ireland. This is not only vital in helping to combat climate change but also reduces flood risk, improves water quality and boosts biodiversity.

Species recovery gained momentum with one of the most successful breeding years for barn owls since our conservation work began. Additionally, we celebrated the phenomenal expansion of pine martens and the remarkable return of breeding ospreys to Co. Fermanagh.

Public support and desire for a healthy natural world have manifested in many ways: from the amazing transformations of community spaces driven by our Nextdoor Nature programme and the enthusiasm for our youth-engagement initiatives to the thousands who have joined our 'Let Nature In' wildlife gardening initiative. Support continues to grow rapidly, with more members and an expanding volunteer base, establishing a real force for change.

All of this is made possible thanks to dedication and unstinting efforts of our staff and volunteer team, and our skilled Board Members, alongside you: our members, supporters, funders and partners. Your role in the fight against the twin nature and climate crises is vital. We look forward buoyed by the successes over this last year and confident that there is much more we can achieve together for local wildlife and wild places.



John Witchell
Chair of Ulster Wildlife

Tribute to Jennifer and Joe



Jennifer Fulton,
Chief Executive 2012-2024

Jennifer joined Ulster Wildlife as Chief Executive in 2012 and led the charity with unwavering passion, energy, and dedication, championing our efforts for nature's recovery. During her 12-year tenure, Jennifer made a profound impact on nature conservation, climate action, and community engagement in Northern Ireland, laying the groundwork for significant progress in reversing nature loss and promoting recovery efforts. One of her early accomplishments was securing new office premises for the charity at McClelland House in 2015, ensuring the organisation had a stable base from which to grow. With a background in agriculture, Jennifer recognised the crucial role of farmers in nature's recovery. She was instrumental in developing Ulster Wildlife's Environmental Farming Scheme Group programme in Fermanagh, which now involves over 500 members managing more than 50,000 hectares of land for nature.

Her foresight into the importance of nature-based solutions in combating climate change led to a major peatland restoration initiative across Northern Ireland and cross-border from 2017 to 2022. This work has since become a core focus for the organisation, with ongoing restoration efforts. Jennifer also championed marine conservation, particularly the role of blue carbon habitats like seagrass and shellfish beds, overseeing the establishment of Northern Ireland's first native oyster nursery in 2022.

Her commitment to sustainability was evident in her efforts to



© Jennifer with HRH King Charles at the launch of the UK Squirrel Accord

drive Ulster Wildlife toward net zero by 2030, including creating a sustainability policy to reduce carbon emissions. Jennifer's landscape-scale approach to conservation led to the acquisition of significant nature reserves, including Glenullin Bog and Haughey's Bog, and the expansion of Slievenacloy to create a larger, more connected space for nature. This approach also influenced collaboration with the Department for Infrastructure to promote biodiversity along road networks.

She was a strong advocate for species conservation, particularly for the red squirrel. Jennifer led a UK-wide conservation project and sat on the advisory group for the UK Squirrel Accord, positioning Ulster Wildlife as a leader in this area. Her science-first approach saw her challenge DAERA's proposed badger cull, advocating for more ethical alternatives.

Jennifer's passion for inspiring young environmental leaders was evident in her development of the Grassroots Challenge programme, engaging hundreds of young people in nature conservation. She also managed an education programme with Belfast City Council, connecting thousands of schoolchildren with nature.

Jennifer's leadership helped Ulster Wildlife navigate the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic, ensuring the charity emerged stronger. Her passing is a significant loss, but her legacy of collaboration, leadership and progress will continue to inspire the charity and its supporters.



Joe Breen,
Board Member 2022-2024

Joe Breen OBE was a passionate advocate for marine conservation and a dedicated environmentalist whose work has left an enduring legacy. Joe became a Board Member of Ulster Wildlife following his retirement from DAERA's Marine Division, and brought an invaluable depth of marine science expertise to the charity and was an unwavering champion for nature.

Throughout his distinguished career, Joe was recognised for his remarkable contributions to marine conservation and environmental protection, earning him the prestigious OBE. His impact on marine conservation was profound; he began his career as a diver and scientist at Ulster Museum, managed the Exploris Aquarium, and later led a team at DAERA investigating damage to the unique horse mussel beds in Strangford Lough. Joe's efforts were instrumental in protecting the wildlife and seabed around Northern Ireland's coast, ensuring that these vital ecosystems were preserved for future generations.

Joe's knowledge, expertise, and passion for marine life were unmatched, and his contributions will be greatly missed by all who had the privilege of working with him. His commitment to protecting our natural world, particularly the rich marine environments he loved so dearly, will continue to inspire those who follow in his footsteps.

Highlights of our year for wildlife



© Simon Gray

April 23

Hughes Insurance supports 'Let Nature In' campaign

We partnered with Hughes Insurance to launch our 'Let Nature In' campaign, encouraging 5,000 households across Northern Ireland to participate in our annual wildlife gardening initiative. This campaign is crucial, as one in nine species in Northern Ireland, including once-common garden visitors like hedgehogs and house sparrows, is at risk of extinction. With support from Hughes, we created an engaging information pack, complete with wildflower seeds, to help people get started. Sign up now at ulstewildlife.org/let-nature-in.



© Ronald Surgenor

May 23

Glenarm gets new native oyster nursery

Native oysters, one of our most threatened marine species, are set to flourish once more along the Glenarm coast with the establishment of our new native oyster nursery at Glenarm Marina. The nursery, housing over 800 mature native oysters suspended in cages, could see millions of larvae released into surrounding waters every year. This initiative aims to help these ocean superheroes bounce back from the brink of extinction, boosting biodiversity, improving water quality and reducing pollution levels – a win-win for people and nature's recovery.



© Mike Snelle

June 23

Phenomenal resurgence of the native pine marten

Our survey of pine martens, red squirrels and grey squirrels revealed that the presence of pine martens in woodlands has nearly doubled over the past five years. Once common throughout Northern Ireland, pine martens experienced a significant decline due to habitat loss and persecution in the 19th century. Today, they are found across all six counties, indicating a significant expansion beyond their traditional stronghold in County Fermanagh. This resurgence is promising news for red squirrels, which have adapted to coexist with these native predators, unlike invasive grey squirrels.



© Andy Rouse 2020VISION

July 23

Endangered lapwing return to Co Down bog

Endangered lapwings made a return to a Co. Down bog for the first time in many years. Two breeding pairs were discovered at Lecale Fens Special Area of Conservation, thanks to our restoration work with local farmer John Crea. Like many other ground-nesting birds, lapwings have suffered major declines over the last 40 years owing to habitat loss and changes in farming practices. Our work eliminating invasive species and scrub has helped to rejuvenate this designated peatland site, making it an attractive breeding ground for this red-listed species.



© Ronald Surgenor

August 23

Ospreys breed in Ireland for the first time in over 200 years

A pair of ospreys successfully bred at a confidential nest site in Co. Fermanagh, marking the first occurrence in Ireland in over 200 years! This magnificent bird of prey, also known as the fish hawk, naturally re-colonised the area and produced at least two, possibly three, chicks – the first known wild osprey chicks on the island of Ireland in modern times. The historic discovery was made by Giles Knight, our Environmental Farming Scheme Advisor, who had been observing the breeding pair for the last three seasons alongside his local farm visits.



September 23

Cows with collars transform conservation efforts at Slievenacloy

At Slievenacloy Nature Reserve in the Belfast Hills, over 25 conservation cattle were equipped with state-of-the-art GPS collars to aid in the restoration of this designated grassland site and enhance biodiversity. These collars allow us to guide the cattle into specific areas within the 258-hectare Area of Special Scientific Interest where grazing is most needed, using audio signals, all managed via an app. Already, the cattle have started to open up the grassland and increase the diversity of the habitat by making space for a greater variety of wildflowers, such as orchids.

Highlights of our year for wildlife



October 23

Wave of support from Wilson Resources

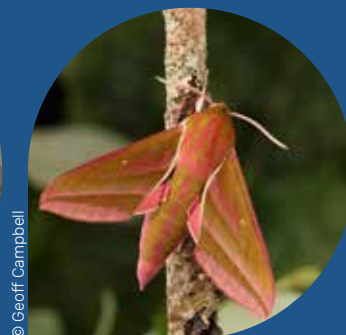
Thanks to a generous donation from Wilson Resources, we have been able to offer a one-year graduate marine conservation internship, to work with our marine team on blue carbon and species restoration projects. As well as providing an additional staffing resource, our marine intern will gain valuable, hands-on experience and training to progress their future career in the sector. This support builds on Wilson Resources' ongoing contributions to our blue carbon habitat restoration efforts, including their donations to our native oyster nurseries.



November 23

Haughey's Bog set to be transformed

We partnered with the An Creagán Centre to transform a former commercially harvested bog near Omagh into Northern Ireland's first demonstration hub for peatland restoration. Over the next ten years, more than 30 hectares of severely degraded habitat – equivalent to 74 football pitches – will be restored to help bring nature back, improve water quality, reduce flood risk and combat climate change. By employing best practice techniques, we will rewet and revitalise Haughey's Bog, allowing plants and wildlife to recover and enabling the site to function as a carbon sink.



© Geoff Campbell

December 23

Appeal launched to safeguard nature's havens

We launched our annual fundraising appeal to raise vital funds to safeguard the 18 precious wildlife havens in our care. From wildflower-rich grasslands to ancient woodlands, our nature reserves provide a vital refuge for wildlife such as red squirrels and orchids to survive, thrive and spread across the countryside. Thanks to the generosity of our members and supporters, we raised over £10,000. This support will help us continue our vital work from carrying out practical conservation tasks and maintaining access to surveying wildlife.



January 24

Barn owls defy odds with surprise winter brood

A pair of barn owls at Ballycruttle Farm, near Downpatrick, made January headlines by welcoming an unusually late winter brood. Four healthy chicks were discovered by our species conservation team in November, marking the latest known barn owl brood in Northern Ireland to date. Typically, barn owl eggs in Northern Ireland are laid in April, with chicks fledging in June or July. Despite the challenges posed by wet weather and floods, the owls defied the odds. All four chicks were ringed in partnership with British Trust for Ornithology and RSPB NI before successfully fledging in December.



February 24

Partnership for peatlands underway

We're helping to facilitate a new Peatland Collaborative and Technical Network to enhance collaboration among organisations involved in peatland restoration. Peatlands are one of Northern Ireland's greatest natural assets, storing over half of our land-based carbon, filtering water and providing habitat for iconic wildlife. However, over 80% are in poor condition. Restoring peatlands is a cost-effective solution to the nature and climate crises. The Network will coordinate actions, share knowledge and standardise monitoring methods, ensuring accurate reporting and supporting future restoration efforts.



© Andy Mearns

March 24

Power NI partners for species action

We renewed our partnership with Power NI, with a focus on protecting three native species – the barn owl, red squirrel and hedgehog – and their habitats across Northern Ireland. Through financial support and public outreach, we aim to encourage the public to help with species conservation by recording sightings and raising awareness of actions they can take to help. This builds upon our successful peatland partnership with Power NI, which provided financial support for restoration initiatives and helped to raise public awareness about the importance of peatlands and their role in mitigating climate change.



Bringing nature back

Our new strategy to put nature into recovery by 2030 has ambitious goals and builds upon our work over the last 45 years to deliver impactful change for nature. It drives us towards our vision of a wilder future, where everyone is inspired to get involved in nature's recovery, and where wildlife plays a key role in addressing the nature and climate emergencies. Although it is a bold and complex challenge, it is a necessity — and the solution to the very real and present dangers that nature and people face in the midst of a climate and nature emergency.

Our ability to galvanize people to take action, to work collaboratively to achieve the greatest impact for nature, and our knowledge, experience, 'localness' and innovative ways of working, are our core strengths. Together, and with the support of local communities, farmers, landowners, businesses, and our members who stand with us, we are in the best place possible to turn our vision into a reality — and ensure the recovery of our natural world.

Public Benefit

- The Trustees of Ulster Wildlife have taken into account the Charity Commission's guidance on Public Benefit, and consider it fully when planning and reviewing the charity's actions and outcomes and in planning our future activities.
- This Trustees' Report shows how we performed against our strategic outcomes in 2023/24.
- Ulster Wildlife's charitable objectives as set out in our Articles of Association can be found on page 33.

Our Vision

A wilder future where people and nature are thriving together

Our Purpose

Our purpose is to protect and restore nature on land and at sea. We will play our part in ending the climate and ecological emergencies, creating a society where nature is valued and is part of our daily lives.

Our Strategic Outcomes for 2030

1. NATURE - Nature is in recovery and wildlife is thriving across Northern Ireland.

2. PEOPLE - More people are taking positive action for nature and climate and are benefitting from time spent in nature.

3. CLIMATE - Nature-based solutions are playing a central role in addressing climate change.

Outcome 1 Nature

Nature is in recovery and wildlife is thriving across Northern Ireland

With one in nine species at risk of extinction here, we need to reverse the decline and bring nature back. It has become clear that protecting what we have left is no longer enough. It is our aim to create new spaces for nature by connecting habitats and restoring landscapes, and by working collaboratively to help species and habitats recover.

850 hectares of land managed for wildlife (equivalent to 1190 football pitches)

500 farmers and landowners received advice

50k ha of farms whose management we influenced.

21 barn owl nest-boxes erected in key locations this year.



One of the barn owl chicks in Co. Down.



Barn Owls

In 2023, our barn owl conservation efforts saw remarkable success with several exciting developments in our work to help these iconic farmland birds recover.

This year, we celebrated the highest number of known fledgling chicks in Northern Ireland, from both sites we monitor and sites monitored by others. This was thanks to a successful breeding season and the formation of new pairs. An unexpected highlight was a very late brood in Co. Down in late 2023.

We worked closely with many landowners to help provide the optimal conditions for barn owls to thrive which culminated in the development of our new guidance document 'Improving Land for Barn Owls'. Twenty-one nest boxes were erected in strategic locations using 'Nature Recovery Network' principles and our very first nest camera was installed to gather valuable data on the secret lives of these elusive birds, with more added throughout the winter in preparation for the 2024 breeding season.

Our newly implemented sightings database is proving effective, and we received nearly 120 records of both barn owls and long-eared owls across the 2023/24 season.

Additionally, we conducted various talks and events to educate youth groups, the general public and farmers about barn owls and the challenges they face. In partnership with RSPB NI and the Northern Ireland Raptor Study Group, we organised an event for farmers and landowners. We also shared barn owl knowledge with the British Trust for Ornithology, BirdWatch Ireland and the Barn Owl Trust.

Red squirrel © Adam Gerrard



Red Squirrels

We released the results from our 2022 Squirrel and Pine Marten Survey which revealed a significant increase in pine marten presence across Northern Ireland. This long-term data is crucial for assessing trends and guiding conservation efforts to protect red squirrels.

Our newly implemented sightings database has proven effective, with nearly 700 records of red squirrels, grey squirrels and pine martens since its launch last year. These records are invaluable and identified six woodlands in 2023 where red squirrels appeared for the first time.

We met with all of the red squirrel volunteer groups to explore how we could further support their indispensable conservation work. We also engaged with all of the local council biodiversity officers to enhance the protection of red squirrels on their properties. Collaborations with NIEA, the Northern Ireland Squirrel Forum and the UK Squirrel Accord continue to drive efforts to restore red squirrels to their former range.

Throughout the year, we held various talks to raise awareness about red squirrels and participated in a successful Red Squirrel Awareness Week in October.

Finally, we teamed up again with Belfast Zoo, NIEA and the National Trust to carry out a further release of red squirrels at Castle Ward estate, near Strangford.

MSc student Helen Peck with hedgehog home



Hedgehogs

We continued our collaboration with NUI Galway on the Irish Hedgehog Survey, to help find out more about these much-loved mammals, primarily promoting hedgehog sightings.

We eagerly await the results from the three-year Irish Hedgehog Survey and look forward to sharing insights on the state of our local hedgehog population. Additionally, we hosted an MSc student from Queen's University Belfast to conduct a density study using camera traps to assess hedgehog populations in various habitats, including gardens, woodlands and farmland.

We have also been raising awareness of hedgehogs and encouraging people to create hedgehog-friendly gardens through our 'Let Nature In' wildlife gardening programme, which we re-launched with sponsorship from Hughes Insurance. As hedgehogs increasingly rely on urban environments, our gardens play a crucial role in their protection. Through these efforts, we aim to foster safer and more welcoming habitats for this charismatic species.

Orchids at the Umbra Nature Reserve



Nature Reserves

Our nature reserves cover nearly 850 hectares of land spread across 19 sites that include some of Northern Ireland's most important habitats and species. The integration of technology has played an increasingly vital role in the management and protection of these special places during the year.

From simple GPS habitat mapping to satellite tracking of grazing animals and high-quality trail cameras, innovative techniques are enhancing our conservation efforts. Looking ahead, AI technology is expected to further revolutionise our approach. However, many tasks still require traditional hard work and physical effort.

This year's conservation highlights included mowing part of the dune slacks at Umbra and clearing the glades at Straidkilly to help wildflowers and pollinators flourish, haloing ancient oaks at Glenarm to prolong their survival and removing rats from the Isle of Muck to safeguard the seabird colony. These activities, along with countless other efforts, contribute significantly not only to conserving habitats and species but also to enhancing their resilience against emerging threats such as invasive species and climate change.

We adopted the 'Nature Recovery Network' approach to the management of our nature reserves, evaluating how they function within the wider landscape and their role in fostering a healthy environment. Maintaining these vital sites demands considerable effort from our dedicated staff team and volunteers, alongside support from our members and funders.

Nature Recovery Networks

We've continued to support the development of ways to create 'more, bigger, better and joined-up' wildlife-rich spaces by working with key stakeholders. Additionally, we have turned our focus inwards to strategically implement these 'Nature Recovery Network' principles at Ulster Wildlife for the benefit of both wildlife and people.

Over the past year, we have been exploring the establishment of Nature Recovery Zones (NRZs) around key nature reserves. This approach, originally developed by the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, involves collaborating closely with neighbouring landowners and farmers to expand wildlife-friendly areas beyond the boundaries of existing nature reserves, effectively creating 'super reserves.'

In March 2024, we visited Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust to meet with key staff and to learn more about how this approach is being implemented on the ground. The visit provided valuable insights and plenty of ideas which we can consider in Northern Ireland. By focusing on NRZs, we aim to create larger, interconnected habitats that support greater biodiversity and resilience. This initiative represents a significant step forward in our commitment to conservation and the creation of thriving, connected ecosystems.

Knowledge exchange trip to Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust



Skylark © Stefan Johansson



Protected Sites

Our collaborative efforts with the Ministry of Defence (MOD) to manage Ballykinler and Magilligan Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) continue to yield positive results, enhancing the biodiversity of these important nature sites.

To protect the unique dune and grassland habitats, dense stands of gorse, sea buckthorn and bracken, that inhibit the growth of crucial plant species, have been systematically removed. Recognising the importance of scrub as a component of dune habitat, some areas have intentionally been left intact to provide food and shelter for birds, mammals and invertebrates. Additionally, we have worked closely with the sites' graziers, developing grazing plans that include optimal grazing practices for sheep and cattle to maintain the key species found in these habitats.

Our monitoring efforts of priority species continued at both sites, including skylark, meadow pipit, petalwort, and the scarce crimson and gold moth. This year, we have enjoyed fruitful partnerships with Butterfly Conservation, Buglife, Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust, and other stakeholders, all of whom contribute to the essential conservation work at these MOD-owned sites.

Environmental Farming Scheme

In 2023, our Environmental Farming Scheme (EFS) Group Programme, funded by DAERA, entered its seventh year and continued to grow, hitting a landmark 500 members. The scheme is designed to support farmers to deliver nature conservation at scale through agri-environment schemes.

We collaborated with 80 farmers to create new EFS Agreements, positively managing over 4,000 hectares of land and injecting an additional half a million pounds annually into rural communities. This has brought the number of EFS Agreements in our group to over 350, representing nearly a quarter of all EFS Higher Agreements across Northern Ireland.

We have also improved our service to farmers, by continuing to specialise in grassland and peatland management and bringing in RSPB NI as a Group partner to support farmers fortunate enough to have curlew and other breeding waders on their land.

As farming policy rapidly evolves with an increasing focus on carbon and efficiency, we have engaged our members through environmental education programmes and farm walks, helping them understand the impacts of these new policies and make informed decisions to maximise their benefits within their own farming systems.

Our collaboration with the Leitrim Sustainable Agriculture Group has allowed us to share experiences of High Nature Value farming and explore best practices across two neighbouring counties with similar land types but different policy regimes. This partnership has provided farmers with cross-border funding and training initiatives, enhancing their resilience in the face of global market pressures, climate change and diseases such as bTB.

The successor to the Environmental Farming Scheme, 'Farming with Nature,' was included in recent policy announcements. Drawing on our extensive experience with current and past schemes, we have contributed to the co-design of this new initiative, working with farming bodies, other eNGOs, and DAERA. Our efforts have focused on assessing the benefits of the Group approach for farmer uptake, understanding and compliance with EFS Higher. We have demonstrated increased scheme uptake with Group support and targeted coverage of protected habitats and species. Additionally, we have identified barriers to scheme entry and are collaborating with the Department to ensure future schemes are accessible, rewarding and beneficial for wildlife.

Engaging with farmers through EFS and the Leitrim Sustainable Agriculture Group; Marsh Trillory © Simon Gray

Public Affairs, Policy and Legislation

The return of the NI Executive in February 2024 was welcome news, and will enable us to step-up our engagement with key politicians, Ministers and decision-makers in the coming year.

During 2023/24, we responded to several key government consultations, including Wildfires in Northern Ireland, the DFI Resource Budget Equality Impact Assessment, and the Carbon Budget. Additionally, we submitted evidence as part of the Office for Environmental Protection's review of protected sites in Northern Ireland. Our involvement continued in the input and co-design of the new 'Farming with Nature' agri-environment scheme being developed by DAERA.

Despite our evidence and significant concerns regarding the impacts on marine biodiversity, the legal challenge for the Islandmagee Gas Storage project was dismissed. However, this was eventually overturned by an appeal in June 2024.

As a leading member of the Northern Ireland Marine Task Force (NIMTF), we participated in several consultations to ensure NI's marine environment is healthy, resilient, and productive. This included advocating for a ban on the sale of plastic-containing wet wipes in the UK, which was successful. Our response to the Office for Environmental Protection's Call for Evidence on Marine Drivers and Pressures to the UK Achieving Good Environmental Status emphasised the importance of the marine environment. Additionally, we continued to engage with the development of the Offshore Renewable Energy Action Plan and Climate Sectoral plans in conjunction with the Department for the Economy.

Farming with Nature: The Flanagan's Farm

Overlooking the shores of Lough Melvin, the Flanagan family has farmed in this corner of Fermanagh for generations. Their superb species-rich grasslands exemplify 'High Nature Value' farmland. For 7 years, the family have been members of our Environmental Farming Scheme (EFS) Group Programme, which supports farmers' efforts to deliver nature conservation at scale.

Through successive agri-environment regimes, traditional management has created fields and meadows teeming with flowering plants and buzzing with pollinators. As Brian takes over from his father Bennie, he is justifiably proud of the wildlife these fields support. His approach is as much second nature as it is High Nature Value; he knows these fields intimately.

Brian is an enthusiastic and engaged member of our EFS Group. He finds that Group meetings add significant value to farm visits. The flexible Group design allows farmers to learn and share their experiences collectively while offering valuable two-way feedback during one-on-one mentoring sessions, free from fear of censure. Annual 'Condition Assessments', a complimentary service for members, provide helpful insights, enabling farmers to participate in the scheme confidently and avoid inspection difficulties.

Speaking about how EFS complements his farming style, Brian said, "Scheme payments offer a regular and welcome additional income stream but can conflict with increasingly variable annual conditions. In short, it feels like farming to the calendar, not the season. Pre-set cutting dates and restrictions on even light dressings of nutrients sometimes present a challenge to delivering environmental benefits. Harbours the rare blue-eyed grass can be both a pain and a privilege!"

Compliance and financial benefits are only part of the story. Brian emphasised, "As a family, we have always managed our farm according to its yearly needs. The presence of 37 plant species in a quadrat is a testament to this. Any new scheme needs to acknowledge and encourage our ability to deliver, rather than simply dictating how to do it."

As DAERA's new agri-environment scheme awaits in the wings, Brian is considering his options. "Any scheme must be appealing to significant numbers of High Nature Value farmers. We should be able to deliver both biodiversity and carbon capture. The support offered by Ulster Wildlife, combined with a more results-based approach, is central to future success."

Brian Flanagan inspecting his fields and wildflower meadows, which are teeming with life



Outcome 2 People

More people are taking positive action for nature and climate and are benefitting from time spent in nature

Without more people taking action themselves, the fight to protect nature and tackle the climate crisis is an insurmountable task. We need to engage and empower people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities to take action and stand up for nature, and also to reconnect people with wild places and green spaces. By increasing the number of people who can speak up for nature, our collective voice will be louder and reach further than ever before.

Corporate volunteers at Slieve Donard Nature Reserve

123 active
volunteers

13,669 members

3,800 people learned
about nature at
our events

2,380 gardens signed
up to our wildlife
gardening campaign

22 Youth Forum
members

Wild Youth participants enjoying a campfire at Bog Meadows Nature Reserve



Wild Youth

This innovative programme enhances the wellbeing of young people in and around the Belfast Hills through nature-based activities. Delivered in conjunction with Belfast Hills Partnership and funded by the National Lottery Community Fund, Wild Youth has made a significant impact.

This year, 252 young people, many from youth clubs in north and west Belfast, completed 2,380 hours of Wild Youth programming with Ulster Wildlife. Activities ranged from pond-dipping at our Bog Meadows Nature Reserve to hiking Cave Hill. Participants not only enjoyed nature-based fun but also reported feeling happier and eager to bring their families back to the local green spaces they explored with Wild Youth.

Additionally, we launched our first-ever Wild Youth Leader training, a weekend-long residential that provided nine young people with hands-on experience in leading their own nature-based wellbeing activities. This new initiative aims to empower young leaders to foster a deeper connection with nature within their communities.

Wildlife Watch celebration event at Bog Meadows Nature Reserve



Wildlife Watch Groups

Our Wildlife Watch Groups for children continue to flourish, with 47 members across three groups in Lisburn, Bloomfield and Bog Meadows.

These groups, run by dedicated volunteers, meet monthly to arrange fun and informative nature-based activities for children. This year, they have enjoyed bat walks and talks, wildflower planting, and learning all about birds at Orangefield Bird Day.

Ulster Wildlife's student placements have also helped out with the groups, teaching children how to spot wildlife from their windows and sharing insights about the small but mighty native oyster. A group celebration at our Bog Meadows Nature Reserve, in Belfast, allowed the children to explore and learn about its wildlife, making it a memorable event for all involved.

Youth Forum members at the COP28 Climate Change Rally in Belfast



Youth Forum

Our Youth Forum continues to thrive, with 22 active members providing a platform for young people to advocate for nature, participate in campaigns and take action for wildlife.

Throughout the year, members engaged in diverse activities such as birdwatching at Portmore Lough, learning about dragonflies at Montiagh's Moss, and assisting with red squirrel conservation. They also attended online talks and made their voices heard at the COP28 climate change rally in Belfast, where one member was invited to speak at the post-rally event. Additionally, Youth Forum members attended the Path to Net Zero event, contributing to Northern Ireland's first Climate Action Plan for 2023-2027, organised in conjunction with the EA Youth Service and DAERA.



Young people who attended the Binevenagh Youth Residential

Young people monitoring plants at the Binevenagh Youth Residential



Binevenagh Youth Residential

In 2023, twenty-two young people attended our week-long summer residential run in collaboration with the Magilligan Field Centre and Binevenagh Landscape Partnership.

Supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the residential provides young people with the opportunity to explore and connect with our nearby Umbra Nature Reserve while completing a range of activities to achieve their Gold Duke of Edinburgh's Award. Activities include everything from peatland restoration tasks and building barn owl boxes to pond maintenance.

Since 2017, Ulster Wildlife has helped over 150 young people earn their Gold Duke of Edinburgh's Award. The residential helps not only foster a love for nature but also equips young people with valuable conservation skills and a sense of achievement.

Moragaine, our New to Nature Reserves Assistant, using an Allen soythe



New to Nature

We welcomed two trainees last year as part of the New to Nature programme, funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. This initiative provided paid work placements and life-changing experiences for young people disadvantaged in the labour market, while building capacity in the environmental sector.

Over the past year, our Nature Reserves Assistant contributed significantly to protecting and conserving wildlife and wild places as a valued member of our Nature Reserves Team. Additionally, our Urban Green Spaces Assistant worked closely with the Community Engagement Team to build a community garden and nature pond at Bog Meadows Nature Reserve. They also assisted in running 'Wild Wellbeing' sessions for young people and helped bring communities together, providing the advice and support needed to help nature flourish on their doorstep and leave a lasting natural legacy.

The programme was delivered through a partnership of Groundwork, The Prince's Trust, Disability Rights UK, and Mission Diverse.

Bog Meadows community garden volunteers



Bog Meadows - Our People, Our Places

Our efforts to foster community buy-in and ownership at Bog Meadows Nature Reserve continued to thrive, thanks to the support from the National Lottery Community Fund.

Last year, we offered a diverse array of programmes, including nature connection sessions, wildlife walks, a summer scheme, school visits, adult and youth volunteering opportunities, and a Wildlife Watch group for children. One of the year's many highlights was the Winter Solstice Lantern Walk, where everyone came together to create a magical winter wonderland for families in the nature reserve.

Our women's group, the 'Meadow Ladies', has flourished, with members regularly monitoring butterflies and providing a wildlife-friendly support network and social space.

With a grant from the Department for Infrastructure, we collaborated with a dedicated team of gardening volunteers, local community groups and businesses to create a 'Community Wildlife Garden.' This inviting space showcases a functional wildlife garden and offers the community a valuable place to connect with nature through health and wellbeing activities.

Barnardos Mulch & Munch project which we are helping to facilitate



Nextdoor Nature

In our second and final year of this project, we continued to collaborate with communities in south and east Belfast, employing a community-led approach to help nature flourish and providing support for groups to take action on their own terms.

Several new groups joined us this year, including Barnardos, RNIB and Hello Neighbour Hello Nature, alongside existing groups Connswater Housing and Glentoran FC.

Barnardos is revitalising an underutilised green space, with local women creating a sensory garden for themselves and their children. RNIB has established a gardening club beside Glentoran Football Club, which was filmed by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. Our engagement with the Roma Community continues to grow and develop. Additionally, we are collaborating with Hello Neighbour, Hello Nature, based at the Mersey Street apartments, to create more wildlife-friendly gardens.

The marine team raising awareness of MPAs at a coastal festival



Marine Protected Areas Community Engagement

This year, we embarked on a mission to promote the importance of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in Northern Ireland and to raise awareness of their value in protecting special marine habitats, species and features.

Starting in early spring 2024, we organised a programme of outreach events to foster community engagement and inspire action. These events included rockpool rambles, beach cleans, educational workshops and participation in various coastal festivals. In March 2024, we brought together partner organisations for a Marine Recovery Workshop to ensure we deliver an informed and comprehensive message when engaging with the public.

By highlighting the unique marine life and habitats protected within MPAs, we aim to promote informed decision-making and empower local stakeholders to contribute to the better management of their MPAs for both people and nature.



Bullfinch © Simon Gray

'Let Nature In' wildlife gardening starter kit



Let Nature In

We relaunched 'Let Nature In,' our wildlife gardening campaign designed to encourage people to create spaces for nature in their gardens.

With support from Hughes Insurance, we produced a new wildlife gardening starter kit, offering advice on supporting birds, insects, hedgehogs and more. We also garnered significant media attention following the launch and ran a successful giveaway with Cool FM, raising campaign awareness and driving sign-ups.

We now have over 2,300 households committed to enhancing wildlife in their outdoor spaces. Alongside their starter packs, participants receive quarterly wildlife gardening update emails filled with tips and advice on the best ways to garden for nature.

Glenullin playpark funded by the Landfill Communities Fund



Landfill Communities Fund

We helped distribute £194,000 of Landfill Communities Fund contributions from Fermanagh and Omagh District Council and Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council to 13 community and environmental projects.

The Landfill Communities Fund (LCF) is a grant scheme that enables operators of landfill sites to contribute a portion of the monies they pay as landfill tax directly to approved Environmental Bodies, such as Ulster Wildlife, for distribution to projects of environmental and public benefit.

2023 saw an increase in project activity with the effects of the pandemic winding down. For the remaining lifespan of contributions from our two landfill operators, we will continue to maximise the benefits of distributing funding to projects which are aligned with our own strategic goals of promoting health and wellbeing through enjoyment of the environment and rebuilding biodiversity.



Volunteers planting trees at Bog Meadows Nature Reserve

Bee & Butterfly walk at Slievenacloy for Ulster Wildlife members



Volunteers repairing fence posts at Slievenacloy Nature Reserve



Exclusive Member Events

During the winter, we successfully delivered another series of online talks, featuring guest speakers on topics ranging from raptors and marine mammals to gardening for wildlife.

For the spring and summer months, we planned an extensive programme of face-to-face events, many of which were exclusive to Ulster Wildlife members. These included guided wildlife walks, woodland foraging and coastal safaris. In September, over 100 members joined us for our AGM and Members' Day at the beautiful Montalto Estate, learning more about bees from our Conservation staff.

Volunteering

We have continued to expand our volunteer efforts by involving more people in crucial projects, such as developing a community garden at Bog Meadows Nature Reserve, conducting bird surveys with our peatlands team, and assisting with the restoration of our newly acquired Haughey's Bog.

Additionally, we have mentored six university placement students across various teams, providing them with hands-on conservation experience to enhance their academic learning. We continue to welcome new students and have introduced short-term project placements for individuals seeking field experience without a year-long commitment.

Our corporate volunteer groups continued to grow, with 18 companies providing 290 staff with the opportunity to volunteer on our nature reserves with a variety of conservation tasks. From path maintenance at Bog Meadows, meadow management at Balloo Wetland, fencing repairs at Slievenacloy, and controlling invasive species at Ballynahone Bog, support from corporate volunteers continues to be invaluable.



Benjamin helping with a Wild Youth pond clipping session



Benjamin and volunteers helping to create the new community wildlife garden at Bog Meadows.

New to Nature gives Benjamin a step on the career ladder

Benjamin Jamieson has been working with our Community Engagement Team as part of the New to Nature programme, funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. This exciting initiative offers young people paid one-year work placements in nature-focused roles, providing valuable experience and fostering diversity in the sector.

“Two years ago, the thought of leading a school group or giving a talk on birdwatching would have given me sleepless nights and shaky hands. Now, thanks to incredible support and training from Ulster Wildlife, these activities excite me!

A year ago, I started as the new Urban Greenspaces Assistant. Before this, I was working in retail but knew it wasn't my true calling. A friend told me about the New to Nature scheme, and it's been an incredible year.

The role enabled me to engage in all aspects of community involvement and also work occasionally on our nature reserves. This gave me the chance to learn from different project officers and gain a comprehensive understanding of community engagement and the diverse ways to connect with various groups. I've worked across Belfast, collaborated with organisations like RNIB, and engaged with individuals ranging from 5-year-old P1 pupils to people in their 80s.

It's hard to express how much this year has meant to me and its impact on my personal growth. From first aid training and gaining a teaching qualification to getting first-hand experience leading a youth group, this past year has undoubtedly given me the skills and confidence for the next step: moving to England to work as a Youth Engagement Officer with Shropshire Wildlife Trust.



Benjamin Jamieson
New to Nature - Urban Greenspaces Assistant



Outcome 3 Climate

Nature-based solutions are playing a critical role in addressing the impacts of climate change in Northern Ireland

We are in the midst of nature and climate crises and neither can be resolved in isolation. The natural world can provide its own solutions to combat and reverse these threats. We are promoting the implementation of nature-based solutions such as the restoration of peatlands and of coastal blue carbon habitats to provide carbon sequestration and storage while supporting resilient wildlife.

40 hectares of peatland restored

1,083 hectares of peatland surveyed

38 million litres of water filtered by native oysters across our nurseries

120 species identified on and surrounding the native oyster nurseries



Peatland restoration in action

Restoring peatlands for nature and climate

During the year, we expanded our peatland restoration efforts and staff team to meet the challenges and objectives set out in the draft NI Peatland Strategy, thanks to funding from DAERA and the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation.

A significant part of this year has involved training and upskilling our new staff members and establishing a new office in Co Tyrone with our project partners, An Creagán. Despite this, we still managed extensive on-the-ground mapping, surveying 1,083 hectares of peatland habitats with peat depth and condition categories mapped across Antrim, Tyrone and Down.

We also acquired a new drone capable of collecting LiDAR and high-resolution aerial imagery, and our team underwent training in its operation. The data collected has formed the basis for developing new peatland restoration plans for three areas.

In addition to these efforts, we restored 40 hectares of lowland raised bog in Co Tyrone and removed invasive vegetation from six hectares of fen in Co Down. We also initiated hydrological monitoring at several new sites to establish baselines before restoration begins.

A key element of this new long-term project is the creation of a Peatland Collaborative Network to help peatland restoration practitioners across Northern Ireland gain skills, share experiences and showcase successes. The first meeting of the Peatland Collaborative Network was held in February 2024 at Peatlands Park, with representatives from 20 different organisations attending and eager to participate. Moving forward, the Peatland Collaborative Network Officer will facilitate training, talks and workshops, and build a comprehensive database of all peatland restoration activities across Northern Ireland.

Finally, we have been collaborating with partners across Ireland to develop a proposal for PEACE Plus funding. This proposal aims to deliver more restoration at key sites and to develop even more restoration plans for the future.

Restoring blue carbon habitats and species

We expanded our native oyster restoration work with the installation of a third nursery at Belfast Harbour's Dobbin Pier.

Belfast Lough was once home to abundant native oyster beds, but intense overfishing, pollution and disease have caused populations to decline by 95% since the mid-1800s. To boost biodiversity, improve water quality, and support the recovery of this priority species, 600 mature native oysters have been placed in purpose-built cages in the waters of this commercial shipping channel, a first for Northern Ireland.

To assess how the oysters have settled into this unique environment, where the waters of the River Lagan and Belfast Lough mix, we have been monitoring oyster growth and associated biodiversity. Over the winter, glass eels (an early life stage of the endangered European eel) were discovered at the nursery on their impressive journey upriver. Beginning as eggs in the Sargasso Sea, the larvae travel around 4,000 miles via the Gulf Stream to reach the shores of Europe.

Throughout the year, more than 100 marine species have been found in and around the oyster cages across all three native oyster nurseries at Belfast Lough, Glenarm and Bangor Marina. These include colourful nudibranchs (a type of sea slug), juvenile fish, crabs and sponges.

At Bangor Marina, there are promising signs that native oysters have begun to settle on the immediate seabed, with the discovery of oyster spat. Oyster larvae tend to settle on other oyster shells, known as spat, forming complex reefs that provide both refuge and habitat for many organisms, including juvenile fish and crabs. This is a promising sign that the oysters are successfully reproducing and releasing larvae into the surrounding waters, aiding the recovery of the native oyster population. Soon, mini oyster reefs could be forming in our nurseries!

Belfast Oyster Nursery



Monitoring the oysters



Student gets hands-on experience in peatland restoration

Brendan Byrne is a student at Queen's University Belfast and has been on placement with our Peatlands Team since January 2024. Brendan has already gained valuable hands-on experience to benefit his future career in nature conservation, learning from our team of experienced peatland practitioners.



Growing up in and around the Sperrins fostered my love of the outdoors and ignited my passion for protecting nature. With a desire to make a positive impact on the environment, a placement with Ulster Wildlife was the perfect fit.

Since joining the Peatlands Team, I have undertaken a project mapping native and invasive scrub species on Ballynahone Bog Nature Reserve to aid restoration plans. Learning to use the specialist ArcGIS software has enabled me to carry out this work and has equipped me with a valuable skill for my future career. I'll never forget the first time I watched the drone take off into the sky and soar kilometres overhead – it was an incredible experience!

Restoring peatlands is crucial for optimising their role in sequestering and storing carbon, and mitigating climate change. Many peatland sites are Areas of Special Scientific Interest and Special Areas of Conservation, home to rare and endangered species, so minimising bare peat is essential not only for wildlife but also to prevent acidification of our water sources.

From measuring peat depths in the beautiful uplands of Mullaghcarra to training as a first aid responder, I have gained experience in many areas within a short timeframe. I cannot thank Ulster Wildlife enough for this diverse and fulfilling placement, which has reinforced my desire to pursue a career in nature conservation.



Brendan assisting with species mapping on Ballynahone Bog Nature Reserve



Brendan Byrne
Peatland Restoration
Placement Student

Brendan conducting research on a raised bog with a fellow MSc student.



Holy blue butterfly on bluebell © Ronald Surgenor

Thank you for Bringing Nature Back

As we reflect on the past year, we are incredibly grateful to our members, donors and other supporters for their unwavering passion and support. You are the driving force behind our shared mission of bringing nature back. With every donation, volunteer hour and membership subscription you are breathing life back into our wild places and the creatures that call them home – thank you!

Donations from business, gifts in wills and donations in lieu of flowers are entered into a special Nature and Climate Fund for the Future – the funds from which goes towards habitat restoration, species protection, education and land purchases.

Once again, this year, support from key funders has been instrumental in developing long-term projects to help with nature's recovery on land and at sea. As we journey forward, we are thrilled to know that our collective efforts are shaping a wilder future for both nature and people.

Garden Tour at Sir Bob Salisbury's



Holly Blue on Bluebell © Ronald Surgenor



Hughes Insurance sponsored the Let Nature In campaign



Members

Nature continues to be under threat, but our members have remained steadfast in their support of local conservation efforts. This year, income from member donations slightly exceeded our annual target, thanks to the generosity of existing members increasing their regular giving in response to our annual appeal for more financial support for our work and lower cancellation rates. Our half-price January sale successfully attracted new supporters, who will pay the full membership rate after the first year.

Member events and online winter talks continue to be popular, with steady attendance each year. In the coming year, we plan to create even more opportunities for members to get closer to nature and learn more about nature conservation through our events.

Legacy and In-Memory

Northern Ireland is blessed with many wonderful landscapes, but our precious wildlife and wild places are in trouble. Leaving a gift in your will or in memory of a loved one ensures we can continue to deliver positive outcomes for nature for years to come. Anyone who loves wildlife can make a unique impact by remembering Ulster Wildlife in their will, ensuring that the species and habitats we treasure are preserved for future generations to enjoy.

Family and friends of Maud Wilson, a long-standing and deeply committed member, honoured her memory by donating to Ulster Wildlife in lieu of flowers, raising much-needed funds for local nature conservation work. Additionally, a significant bequest was made by life member Valerie Cooper. Gifts in wills help purchase land, protect key species, and nurture future wildlife champions.

Businesses

Working with businesses can be mutually beneficial for both nature and the companies involved, fostering a partnership that supports nature's recovery while also enhancing corporate social responsibility and sustainability efforts.

Thanks to Hughes Insurance for sponsoring the 'Let Nature In' wildlife gardening campaign; Wilson Resources for supporting our blue carbon work and funding a one-year graduate marine conservation post; Power NI for providing financial support for peatland restoration work, volunteering on our natures reserves and raising awareness of peatlands; Giraffe Associates for funding specialist barn owl nest box cameras; Field Day Ireland and Ardbarron Trust for their generous annual donations. Several businesses also raised funds for Ulster Wildlife through the Benevity portal, which powers purpose-driven business initiatives.

Thank you to our supporters



Irish Hare © Simon Gray

Grey heron at Balloo Woodland © Ronald Surgenor



Funders

Statutory (government) funding and charitable trust funding help support some of our larger projects and areas of work and are essential funding streams for many charities. Thank you to our funding partners for providing financial support for several specific projects over the past year.

Thanks to Ards and North Down Borough Council, Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, Garfield Weston Foundation, Ministry of Defence, National Lottery Community Fund, National Lottery Heritage Fund and Department of Communities, RSWT and Swire Charitable Trust.

New Leaf Compost donation for Bog Meadows



Fundraising & Donations

While membership is our primary form of fundraising – enabling the charity to plan for future work through regular giving – we are incredibly grateful for all of the other donations we received during the year.

Donations include a heavy-duty refurbished laptop for the Nature Reserve Team from NI Trucks; peat-free compost for the new community wildlife garden at Bog Meadows Nature Reserve from Natural World Products; birthday gifts from supporters on Meta, and individuals like Irene Surgenor who availed of our donation envelopes in lieu of gifts for her birthday celebrations; donations for talks we delivered; and generous gifts from many supporters towards our work in general.



Plans for the Future

With the bold and ambitious goals outlined in our Strategy 2030, we have a significant task ahead to restore and reverse the decline of nature. This year, we have made substantial progress across all strategy areas, laying a strong foundation to achieve our vision of a thriving natural world. We aim to inspire everyone to participate in nature's recovery, ensuring nature plays a crucial role in addressing both the nature and climate emergencies.

Long-eared owl © Ronald Surgenor

Outcome 1: Nature is in recovery and wildlife is thriving across Northern Ireland

We will continue to advocate for, guide, and inform the development of a national 'Nature Recovery Network' for Northern Ireland – a strategic approach to creating more, bigger, better and joined-up spaces for wildlife to thrive.

At a more localised level, we will seek further opportunities to establish nature recovery zones around our nature reserves, creating extensive wildlife-friendly areas that connect with each other. In partnership with stakeholders, we will also implement specific actions to support the recovery of key species.

We will build upon our efforts to engage farmers and landowners in nature's recovery, and we will engage with the fishing industry to ensure our seas are well-managed for nature.

Outcome 2: More people are taking positive action for nature and climate and are benefitting from time spent in nature.

We will continue to support and empower people to become agents of change to help address the climate and nature emergencies while developing new and innovative ways to engage with more diverse audiences.

Young people and under-represented groups will remain at the forefront of our efforts, and we will create new opportunities to connect and empower them to campaign, take action as individuals and within their communities and drive political and behavioural change. This approach will be embedded in our forthcoming People Engagement Strategy.

Growing and strengthening our membership and supporter network is key to delivering on the ambition of our strategy and we will continue to focus our efforts on engaging and inspiring new members and supporters from every part of society.

Outcome 3: Nature-based solutions are playing a central role in addressing climate change

We will restore natural ecosystems at scale, expanding our peatland restoration work, develop new native oyster nurseries, and establish new partnership projects to deliver blue carbon habitat restoration such as seagrass. Together, these initiatives will provide long-term carbon sequestration and storage while also promoting diverse and resilient wildlife.

Financial Review at 31 March 2024

Ulster Wildlife’s financial position remained stable during the year and a modest surplus on unrestricted activities was achieved.

Sources of Income

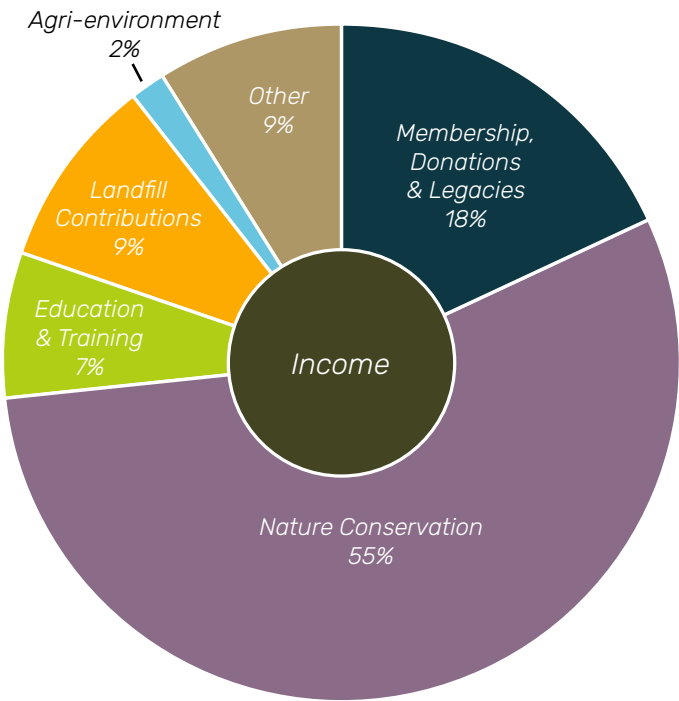
Unrestricted income is revenue generated by the charity for its general purposes. It can be used at the discretion of the charity on any of the charity’s objects and a substantial component is donations from our members and supporters.

Unrestricted income is 15% higher than the previous year (+£101k). The main contributing factor was an increase in donations and legacies (+£89k).

Restricted income is income given to the charity for specific purposes. It may be a grant for a specific piece of conservation work or education activity or funds to be awarded as grants to third parties, in line with specific grant

guidelines. Restricted income remained at a similar level to the previous year with a small decrease of 3% (–£84k).

Ulster Wildlife’s restricted income has two main components, grants for specific conservation and education activity which is delivered by the charity; and Landfill Communities Funds where grants are awarded by the charity to third parties for purposes defined under the Landfill Communities Fund guidelines. Detail of the funders which contribute to our restricted projects and other sources of restricted income is outlined in Notes 4 – 8 of the Financial Statements.



Income	Unrestricted Funds £'000	Restricted Funds £'000	Total Funds £'000	Ratio
Membership, Donations & Legacies	541	54	595	18%
Nature Conservation	-	1,794	1,794	55%
Agri-environment payments	47	6	53	2%
Landfill Tax Contributions	-	299	299	9%
Environmental Education & Training	-	230	230	7%
Other Income	175	110	285	9%
Total Income	763	2,493	3,256	100%

Financial Review at 31 March 2024

How the Charity Spent its Resources

Overall expenditure was 6% lower in the year to 31 March 2024 than in the previous year (–£174k).

In line with the income split, a large part of the expenditure is on conservation and education activity.

Restricted projects make a contribution to core overhead costs for time and expenses incurred in running the projects.

After taking this contribution into account an unrestricted surplus of £57k was generated.

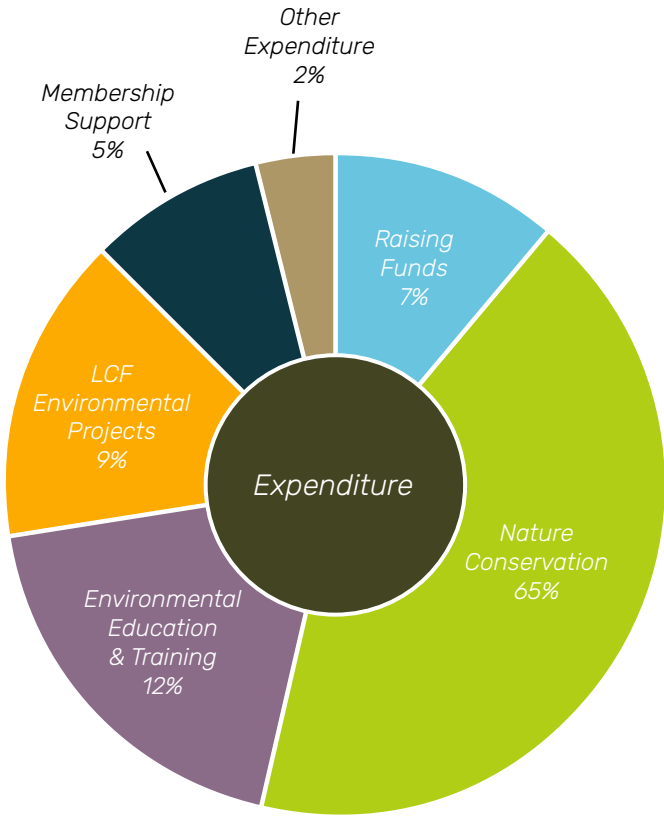
The surplus is in keeping with the charity’s objectives which are to deliver conservation outcomes rather than a surplus of income over expenditure. A modest surplus is, however, necessary in order to maintain financial stability and help to secure the long-term viability of the charity.

After expenditure on restricted projects, the ‘surplus’ on restricted funds amounted to £653k.

This ‘surplus’ represents income received relating to projects in the year to 31 March 2024 where expenditure was incurred in prior years and was in line with expectations. It also includes £250k received in the year to assist with cash flow in large scale funded projects for conservation works. When these project works are complete Ulster Wildlife can use these funds to invest in land for peatland restoration.

£73k of the surplus relates to income received for the purchase of capital equipment including where the expenditure has been capitalised on the balance sheet.

Restricted financial reserves cannot be utilised by the charity, except for the very specific purposes set out by the funder. These financial reserves are therefore not available to fund either general working capital requirements or any unexpected events.



Expenditure	Total Funds £'000	Ratio
Raising Funds	172	7%
Nature Conservation	1,657	65%
Environmental Education & Training	291	12%
LCF Environmental Projects	231	9%
Membership Support	130	5%
Other Expenditure	59	2%
Total Expenditure	2,540	100%

Organisational support costs of £364k (Notes 10 & 11) have been allocated across the activities above on a proportional basis representing the resources expended to run all aspects of the charity.

Structure, Governance & Management

Ulster Wildlife Trust, (operating as Ulster Wildlife) is registered with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland (NIC101848) and is a not-for-profit company incorporated in Northern Ireland, limited by guarantee (NI 12711). It is an independent body, locally governed, affiliated to The Wildlife Trusts, a federated network of 46 charities across the UK.

The charity is governed by a Board of Trustees (Council) comprised of up to 17 members who serve up to a nine-year term. The Ulster Wildlife Council is responsible for making strategic decisions in relation to policy and procedure within Ulster Wildlife, while day-to-day operational decisions and management is delegated to the Chief Executive, who in turn oversees the staff team of Ulster Wildlife of which there were 45 at the end of March 2024.

All Board Members receive induction training in relation to their role, are provided with a Governance Handbook when they are appointed and adhere to the Code of Good Governance.

Ulster Wildlife also has an Honorary President, Joe Furphy, who does not have a voting or decision-making role on the Board but contributes to discussions and carries out representation for the Charity.

Details of serving Trustees during 2023/24 can be found below.

CHAIR



Ken Brundle
(Appointed on 17 September 2013, appointed Chairman 22 November 2017. Stood down on 30 September 2023)

CHAIR



John Witchell
(Appointed on 07 December 2017, appointed Chair 30 September 2023.)
F & A

VICE-CHAIR



Stephen Aston
(Appointed on 07 December 2017, appointed Vice Chairman on 27 September 2018)
F & A

VICE-CHAIR



David Sterling
(Appointed 16 October 2020, appointed Vice Chair 02 December 2021)
E, F & A

HONORARY TREASURER



David Hendron
(Appointed on 25 July 2018, appointed Treasurer on 27 September 2018)
F & A

COMPANY SECRETARY



Catherine Thompson
(Appointed on 14 March 2019, appointed Company Secretary on 18 March 2021)
G

COUNCIL MEMBER



Anna Barclay
(Appointed 24 November 2020)
G

COUNCIL MEMBER



Joe Breen
(Appointed 9 June 2022. Passed away June 2024)
E

COUNCIL MEMBER



Bob Brown
(Appointed 16 October 2020)
E

COUNCIL MEMBER



Richard Buchanan
(Co-opted 31 Oct 2023)
F

COUNCIL MEMBER



Chloe Craig
(Co-opted 30 Nov 2023)
E

COUNCIL MEMBER



Fiona Davey
(Appointed on 19 November 2015)
G

COUNCIL MEMBER



Ciarán Ferrin
(Co-opted 30 Nov 2023)
G

COUNCIL MEMBER



Seamus McKee
(Appointed 18 March 2021)
F

COUNCIL MEMBER



Stephen Smith
(Appointed 24 November 2020 Resigned 19 March 2024.)
F

COUNCIL MEMBER



Helen Surgenor
(Appointed 24 November 2020 Resigned 30 Sept 23)
F

COUNCIL MEMBER



Ed Wright
(Appointed on 07 October 2015)
F

HONORARY PRESIDENT



Joe Furphy



Marsh fritillary © Simon Gray



Cormorant © Ronald Surgenor



Frogs © Ronald Surgenor

Changes to the Council during 2023/2024

Helen Surgenor resigned on 30 September 2023 alongside Stephen Smith on 19 March 2024. Ken Brundle stood down as Chair on 30 September 2023 having served on the Council since 2013 and as Chair since 2017. Ken brought a wealth of experience and expertise, and his contribution has been invaluable. John Witchell was appointed as new Chair. Richard Buchanan was coopted on 31 October 2023.

As part of our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion two youth Council members, Chloe Craig and Ciarán Ferrin, were coopted on 30 November 2023.

The governance sub-structure comprises of four sub-committees: Governance, Finance & Audit, Environment and Fundraising. This governance framework is designed to ensure that we are an accountable, effective and efficient charity and to manage risk at the required level.

1. The Governance Committee (G) ensures that the Ulster Wildlife Council fulfils its legal, ethical and functional responsibilities through adequate governance policy development, skills audits, recruitment strategies for Council Members, training programmes, monitoring of Council activities and evaluation of Council's performance, human resources and health & safety management.

2. The Finance & Audit Committee (F&A) supports Council in ensuring that the effective governance of Ulster Wildlife is maintained in relation to: Financial and Physical Resources.

3. The Environment Committee (E) provides ongoing strategic input into the organisation's work linked to nature recovery and community action. The remit of this Committee encompasses nature reserves, environmental projects linked to habitats and/or species, and input into regional policy issues.

4. The Fundraising Committee (F) provides ongoing strategic input to the organisation's fundraising activities - with a focus on unrestricted fundraising.

Statement of Trustees' Responsibilities

The Trustees (who are also the Directors of Ulster Wildlife Trust) are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Annual Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and regulations.

Company and charity law requires the Directors to prepare financial statements for each financial year, which give a true and fair view of the state of the affairs of the charitable company and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the Directors are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently,
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities Statement of Recommended Practice,
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent,
- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements,
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charitable company will continue in operation.

The Trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the charity's transactions and disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and to enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Charities

Act 2008. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Provision of Information to Auditors

Each of the individuals who is a Trustee at the date of approval of this report confirms that:

- so far as they are aware, there is no relevant audit information of which the charity's auditor is unaware; and
- they have taken all the steps that they ought to have taken to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the charity's auditors are aware of that information.

Auditor

DNTCA Limited are deemed to be re-appointed under section 487(2) of the Companies Act 2006. This report was approved by the Board on 29 August 2024 and signed on its behalf by

John Witchell
Chairman

David Hendron
Honorary Treasurer



Articles of Association

Ulster Wildlife's charitable objectives as set out in our Articles of Association are:

(1) The advancement of environmental protection and improvement, in particular the conservation of all aspects of Northern Ireland and its adjacent areas' wildlife, biodiversity, geodiversity and associated natural beauty for the benefit of present and future generations by:

(a) safeguarding, maintaining and enhancing natural biodiversity and geodiversity through the management of nature reserves (however entitled or however established);

(b) practising, advocating, encouraging, influencing, advising and campaigning for best conservation practice involving land, sea and freshwater management practice in ways that favour biodiversity, geodiversity, ecosystem health, sustainable use of natural resources and sustainable development;

(c) undertaking action, independently or in partnership, to protect threatened habitats, sites of geodiversity or heritage significance, at local, national or international levels on or in water, land and adjacent seas;

(d) taking account of other aspects of the natural heritage on which wildlife is dependent or to which it contributes, including landforms and landscapes;

(e) improving the quality of life of people through supporting a biodiversity, ecosystem, geodiversity and sustainability led approach to the management and design of the natural and built environment.

(2) The advancement of education by raising the public's awareness and knowledge of all aspects of the natural and built heritage, biodiversity and geodiversity of Northern Ireland and its adjacent areas by promoting, undertaking and co-operating in research and gathering and sharing information on these topics.

(3) The advancement of citizenship through volunteering linked to natural heritage including the promotion of sustainable food production and sustainable lifestyles.

(4) The advancement of the arts, culture, heritage and science linked to natural heritage through events and project-based action.

(5) The advancement of health and well-being through activities linked to the natural environment.

Devils bit scabious © Ronald Surgenor



Blue tit © Simon Gray

Key Policies & Processes

Managing Risk

Ulster Wildlife Trustees are responsible for overseeing risk management by the charity. They are responsible for ensuring that Ulster Wildlife has an effective system of internal control, management and audit to enable the charity to take advantage of opportunities whilst ensuring that the charity remains protected. Risk management is well established and is considered in every aspect of our work. We have an active risk management process in place to make sure that appropriate risk assessments are completed and controls are in place to manage and mitigate risk across the organisation.

The Board of Trustees and Senior Leadership Team work together to ensure that risk is very carefully assessed in relation to the health, welfare and safety of staff, volunteers and the public. As such, health & safety risk management is supported by an external consultant. Risks are also reviewed in the broadest sense and anything that might alter or impact on the charity's ability to fulfil its charitable objectives is considered.

Processes include:

- Risk assessments are completed by all staff to identify, evaluate and manage risks.
- Health & Safety management system including phone app is used to facilitate management and record key information.
- Risk register with mitigation actions is reviewed at least quarterly by the Board.
- Health & Safety is a key factor in selecting external contractors and Health & Safety obligations are included in awarded external contracts.
- Comprehensive risk management reviews are carried out once a year by all subcommittees and are reported to the Board Meeting.
- Multi-year planning, with targets that are linked to delivery of organisational strategy.
- 'Value for Money' principles guide when and where we source goods and services.
- Annual external audit.

The most significant risks identified in 2023/24 were:

- The cost of living crisis and its continued impact on fundraising.
- Impact of inflationary pressures on running costs.
- Staff retention and recruitment.
- Delays in agreement of funding due to lack of NI Executive in place.

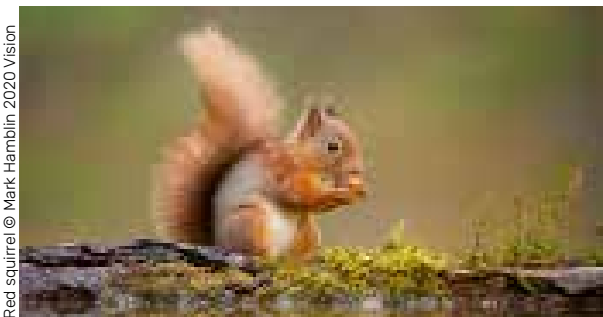
Cost of living crisis and inflationary increases were actively managed during the year. A membership growth plan and associated staffing structure has been put into place in an effort to return to membership growth over the coming years.

Staff turnover and recruitment was higher than usual during the year due to funding uncertainties and some projects ending, and others starting during the year. Government funding was agreed in summer 2023, with five-year agreements now in place through the DAERA Environment Fund. Staff retention will remain a key issue for the charity to manage moving forward.

The most significant risks identified for 2024/25 are:

- Staff retention and recruitment.
- Staffing gaps to be managed including recruitment of a new Chief Executive.
- Managing the influx of government policies and consultations due to the return of the NI Executive.

Red squirrel © Mark Hamblin 2020 Vision



Equal Opportunities and Diversity

Ulster Wildlife aims to be an employer of choice, for people from different backgrounds, and through our Equality in the Workplace policy we promote respect for the individual and equality of opportunity.

Our aim is for our workforce to be truly representative of all sections of the wider community and for each employee to feel respected and able to give their best. Within Ulster Wildlife there is respect for promotion and protection of each individual's human rights. Ulster Wildlife promotes being at ease with all aspects of diversity, built on fairness and respect for all. Decisions about recruitment and selection, promotion, training or any other benefit are made objectively and without discrimination.

Our Equality in the Workplace policy helps all those who work for us to develop their full potential and ensure that the talents and resources of the workforce are utilised to fully maximise the efficiency of the organisation.

Sustainability

We have set a target to achieve net zero emissions by 2030 and we take sustainability very seriously. We have already commenced the net zero journey, which will be an integral part of our organisational and project planning. All electricity used is renewable and we have started phasing in EVs as budget allows. During the project development phase for new projects, carbon footprint and location of project staff is considered, as by the nature of our work, our activities are dispersed throughout Northern Ireland.

A priority for Northern Ireland in terms of the regional carbon budget is to restore damaged peatland and this is a significant delivery strand for the charity. We are also increasing our work in the area of 'blue carbon' habitat restoration.

Wider network

Ulster Wildlife is part of a collective of 46 Wildlife Trusts, represented nationally by The Royal Society for Wildlife Trusts (RSWT). The Wildlife Trusts collectively act together, where appropriate, in key policy areas and campaigns.

Financial Management

Financial Reserves Policy

The Trustees recognise there is a balance to be achieved between delivering our charitable objectives and managing the actual and potential risks of failing to meet our liabilities when they fall due. Consequently, the Trustees plan to hold a level of unrestricted financial reserves to provide the necessary resilience to manage these risks.

These risks include, amongst others:

- Loss of funding sources
- Funding delays
- Costs associated with unforeseen closure

The Trustees, having assessed the likelihood of these risks occurring, consider that an unrestricted financial reserve level (excluding designated funds) equal to six months unrestricted payroll and support costs and potential winding up costs should be targeted. This amounts to around £1m for the year to 31 March 2024 as permanent staff numbers have increased. The balance on unrestricted reserves as of 31 March 2024, net of unrestricted fixed assets is £741k which would cover potential winding up costs and 4 months of payroll for permanent positions and support costs.

Designated Funds

In addition to the above, the Trustees have designated certain unrestricted funds as the 'Fund for the Future'. This money is earmarked to help further the charity's strategic objectives, delivering long term strategic change and this includes the acquisition of new nature reserves.

Monitoring and Reviewing

Financial reserve levels are monitored on a quarterly basis throughout the year as a standing item on the Finance Committee's agenda. They also form a part of the financial information presented to the Board on a quarterly basis.

Our Promise to Our Supporters

At Ulster Wildlife our members, supporters and funders are at the heart of everything we do to help wildlife and wild places thrive. That is why, as a registered charity (NIC101848), we are part of the Fundraising Regulator's self-regulatory scheme.

As members of the scheme, we follow the Institute of Fundraising's Codes of Fundraising Practice and comply with the key principles embodied in the Codes. This means when supporters make a donation to us they can be assured that our fundraising is legal, open, honest and respectful.

Our Fundraising Promise



We are committed to high standards.

- We do all we can to ensure that staff, fundraisers, volunteers and fundraising contractors working with us to raise funds comply with the Code and with this Promise.
- We comply with the law including those that apply to data protection, health and safety and the environment.

We are honest and open.

- We tell the truth and do not exaggerate; we do what we say we are going to do.
- We answer all reasonable questions about our fundraising activities and costs.
- We are clear about who we are, what we do and how donations are used.
- Where we have a promotional agreement with a commercial company, we make clear how much of the purchase price we receive.
- We give a clear explanation of how a donation can be made and how to amend a regular commitment.

We are respectful.

- We respect the rights, dignities and privacy of our supporters and beneficiaries.
- We will not put undue pressure on anyone to make a gift, and if a person does not want to give or wishes to cease giving, we will respect that decision.
- If someone tells us that they don't want us to contact them in a particular way, we will not do so – our Privacy Notice for Members and Supporters is available on our website at ulsterwildlife.org/privacy-notice

We are accountable.

- If anyone is unhappy with anything we have done whilst fundraising, they can contact us to make a complaint at complaints@ulsterwildlife.org. For further information, read our complaints policy.
- If we cannot resolve a complaint, we accept the authority of the Fundraising Regulator to make a final adjudication.



Redshank © Simon Gray

Advisors, Senior Personnel and Administrative Details

Auditors	DNT Chartered Accountants Ormeau House 91-97 Ormeau Road Belfast BT7 1SH
Bankers	Danske Bank Belfast Finance Centre PO Box 183 Donegall Square West Belfast BT1 6JS
Solicitors	Edwards & Co., 28 Hill Street, Belfast BT1 2LA
Company Secretary	Catherine Thompson
Senior Leadership Team	Jennifer Fulton - Chief Executive Officer Dawn Miskelly - Director of Development and Governance Peter McEvoy - Director of Land Management
Charity Registration Number	NIC 101848
Company Registration Number	NI12711
Registered Office and Operational Address	McClelland House 10 Heron Road Belfast BT3 9LE

Independent Auditors' Report to the Members of the Ulster Wildlife Trust

Opinion

We have audited the charity financial statements of Ulster Wildlife Trust ('the charity') for the financial year ended 31 March 2024 which comprise the Statement of Financial Activities (incorporating an Income and Expenditure Account), the Balance Sheet, the Statement of Cash Flows and notes to the financial statements, including the summary of significant accounting policies set out in note 2. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including FRS 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland" and Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with FRS 102.

In our opinion when reporting in accordance with a fair presentation framework the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the charity's affairs as at 31 March 2024 and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice;
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the charity in accordance with ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled

our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the charity's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from the date when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the trustees with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

Other information

The other information comprises the information included in the annual report other than the financial statements and our Auditor's Report thereon. The trustees are responsible for the other information contained within the annual report. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

Our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the course of the audit, or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether this gives rise to a material

misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact. We have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinion on other matter prescribed by the Companies Act 2006

In our opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit:

- the information given in the Trustees Annual Report for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements; and
- the Trustees Annual Report has been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

In the light of the knowledge and understanding of the charity and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified material misstatements in the Trustees Annual Report.

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the Companies Act 2006 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept; or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- certain disclosures of trustees' remuneration specified by law are not made.

Independent Auditors' Report to the Members of the Ulster Wildlife Trust

Responsibilities of trustees for the financial statements

As explained more fully in the Statement of Trustees' Responsibilities, the trustees are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as they determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the trustees are responsible for assessing the charity's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless management either intends to liquidate the charity or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an Auditor's Report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We design procedures in line with our responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of irregularities, including fraud. The extent to which our procedures are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud is detailed below:

Our approach to identifying and assessing the risks of material misstatement in respect of irregularities, including fraud and non compliance with laws and regulations, was as follows:

- The engagement partner ensured that the engagement team collectively had the appropriate competence, capabilities and skills to identify or recognise non-compliance with applicable laws and regulations;
- We identified the laws and regulations applicable to the company through discussions with directors and other management,
- We focused on specific laws and regulations which we considered may have a direct material effect on the financial statements or the operations of the company,

To address the risk of fraud through management bias and override of controls, we:

- Performed analytical procedures to identify any unusual or unexpected relationships;
- Investigated the rationale behind significant or unusual transactions;
- Tested journal entries to identify unusual transactions;
- Assessed whether judgements and assumptions made in determining the accounting estimates were indicative of potential bias.

In response to the risk of irregularities and non-compliance with laws and regulations, we designed procedures which included, but were not limited to:

- Agreeing financial statement disclosures to underlying supporting documentation;

Irish Moiled Cattle © Ronald Surgenor

Independent Auditors' Report to the Members of the Ulster Wildlife Trust

- Reading the minutes of meetings of those charged with governance;
- Enquiring of management as to actual and potential litigation and claims;
- Reviewing correspondence with HMRC, Companies House and the company's legal advisors.

There are inherent limitations in our audit procedures described above. The more removed that laws and regulations are from financial transactions, the less likely it is that we would become aware of non-compliance. Auditing standards also limit the audit procedures required to identify non-compliance with laws and regulations to enquiry of the directors and other management and the inspection of regulatory and legal correspondence, if any.

Material misstatements that arise due to fraud can be harder to detect than those that arise from error as they may involve deliberate concealment or collusion.

A further description of our responsibilities is available on the Financial Reporting Council's website at: www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of our auditor's report.

Further information regarding the scope of our responsibilities as auditor

As part of an audit in accordance with ISAs (UK), we exercise professional judgement and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting

from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.

- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the charity's internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by trustees.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of the trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the charity's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our Auditor's Report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our Auditor's Report. However, future events or conditions may cause the charity to cease to continue as a going concern.
- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

The purpose of our audit work and to whom we owe our responsibilities

This report is made solely to the charity's members, as a body, in accordance with Chapter 3 of Part 16 of the Companies Act 2006. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charity's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charity and the charity's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.



Mr M Nangle (Senior Statutory Auditor) for and on behalf of **DNTCA Limited, Ormeau House, 91-97 Ormeau Road, Belfast, BT7 1SH.**

Statement of Financial Activities (including income and expenditure account) for the year ended 31 March 2024

	Notes	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	2024 Total Funds £	2023 Total Funds £
INCOME FROM:					
Donations & Legacies	3	541,576	53,689	595,265	525,356
Conservation Activities	4	-	1,793,700	1,793,700	1,918,730
Agri-environment Payments		46,625	6,596	53,221	28,242
Charitable Activities - Landfill Contributions	5	-	299,134	299,134	227,085
Education & Training Activities	6	-	230,002	230,002	313,655
Interest Received	7	17,949	7,935	25,884	6,872
Other Income	8	156,763	101,718	258,481	218,698
TOTAL INCOME		762,913	2,492,774	3,255,687	3,238,638
EXPENDITURE ON					
Raising Funds	9	144,790	-	144,790	80,453
Charitable Activities	10	706,227	1,688,756	2,394,983	2,633,739
TOTAL EXPENDITURE		851,017	1,688,756	2,539,773	2,714,192
NET INCOME BEFORE TRANSFERS AND FOREIGN EXCHANGE					
		(88,104)	804,018	715,914	524,446
Gains/(losses) from Foreign Exchange		(6,368)	68	(6,300)	(871)
Transfers Between Funds	14	151,567	(151,567)	-	-
NET MOVEMENT IN FUNDS		57,095	652,519	709,614	523,575
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS:					
Total Funds at 1 April 2023		1,198,737	1,989,544	3,188,281	2,664,706
Transfer (from)/to Designated Fund for the Future		-	-	-	-
TOTAL FUNDS AT 31 MARCH 2024		1,255,832	2,642,063	3,897,895	3,188,281

The notes on pages 40 to 43 form part of these financial statements.
The Statement of financial activities includes all gains and losses in the year.
All income and expenditure derives from continuing activities.

Statement of Financial Position at 31 March 2024

	Notes	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	2024 Total Funds £	2023 Total Funds £
FIXED ASSETS					
Tangible Assets	16	305,652	1,552,563	1,858,215	1,826,741
CURRENT ASSETS					
Debtors	17	296,919	238,726	535,645	226,806
Cash at Bank and in Hand		869,305	1,311,472	2,180,777	2,076,888
		1,166,224	1,550,198	2,716,422	2,303,694
CURRENT LIABILITIES					
Creditors	18	208,608	117,882	326,490	591,231
NET CURRENT ASSETS		957,616	1,432,316	2,389,932	1,712,463
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES		1,263,268	2,984,879	4,248,147	3,539,204
CREDITORS due in more than 1 year					
Capital Grants	19	7,436	342,816	350,252	350,923
		1,255,832	2,642,063	3,897,895	3,188,281
FINANCIAL RESERVES					
General Fund	20	1,046,346	-	1,046,346	989,251
Fund for the Future	22	209,486	-	209,486	209,486
Restricted Funds	21	-	2,642,063	2,642,063	1,989,544
		1,255,832	2,642,063	3,897,895	3,188,281

These financial statements were approved and signed by the members of the Board and authorised for issue on 29th August 2024



John Witchell, Chair



David Hendron, Honorary Treasurer

The notes on pages 41 to 44 form part of these financial statements.
Company Registration Number: NI 12711

Statement of Cash Flows for year ending 31 March 2024

	2024	2023
	£	£
Cash Flows from operating activities		
Net Income/(Expenditure)	715,914	524,446
<i>Adjustments for</i>		
Depreciation of Tangible Fixed Assets	41,152	25,982
Increase/(Decrease) in Deferred Capital Grant	(671)	(1,006)
(Increase)/Decrease in Trade and Other Debtors	(308,839)	491,109
Increase/(Decrease) in Trade and Other Creditors	(264,741)	(483,320)
Net Cash (used in)/from Operating Activities	182,815	557,211
Cash Flows from Investing Activities		
Purchase of Tangible Assets	(72,626)	(187,508)
Disposal of Tangible Assets	-	4,796
Net Cash used in Investing Activities	(72,626)	(182,712)
Net Increase /(Decrease) in Cash and Cash Equivalents	110,189	374,499
Cash and Cash Equivalents at Beginning of the Year	2,076,888	1,703,260
Net Increase/(Decrease) in Cash and Cash Equivalents due to Exchange Rate Movements	(6,300)	(871)
Cash and Cash Equivalents at End of the Year	2,180,777	2,076,888

Notes to the accounts

1 Statement of Compliance

These financial statements have been prepared in compliance with FRS102, 'The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and the Republic of Ireland', 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 (Charities SORP (FRS102)) and the Charities Act 2008.

2 Accounting Policies

Basis of preparation

The financial statements have been prepared on the historical cost basis, as modified by the revaluation of certain financial assets and liabilities measured at fair value through income or expenditure.

The financial statements are prepared in sterling, which is the functional currency of the entity.

Going concern

There are no material uncertainties about the charity's ability to continue.

Fund accounting

Unrestricted funds are available for use, at the discretion of the trustees, to further any of the charity's purposes.

Restricted funds are subject to restrictions on their expenditure declared by the donor or funder or through the terms of an appeal.

Incoming resources

All incoming resources are included in the statement of financial activities when entitlement has passed to the charity; it is probable that the economic benefits associated with the transaction will flow to the charity and the amount can be reliably measured. The following specific policies are applied to particular categories of income:

- income from donations or grants is recognised when there is evidence of entitlement to the gift, receipt is probable and its amount can be measured reliably.
- legacy income is recognised when receipt is probable and entitlement is established.
- income from contracts for the supply of services is recognised with the delivery of the contracted service.

These are classified as unrestricted funds unless there is a contractual requirement for it to be spent on a particular purpose and returned if unspent, in which case it is regarded as restricted.

Resources expended

Expenditure is recognised on an accruals basis as a liability is incurred. Expenditure is classified under headings of the statement of financial activities to which it relates:

- expenditure on raising funds includes the costs of all fundraising activities.

- expenditure on charitable activities includes all costs incurred by the charity in undertaking activities that further its charitable aims for the benefit of its beneficiaries, including those support costs and costs relating to the governance of the charity.

All costs are allocated to expenditure categories reflecting the use of the resource. Direct costs attributable to a single activity are allocated directly to that activity. Shared costs are apportioned between the activities they contribute to on a reasonable, justifiable and consistent basis.

Depreciation

Purchased assets, which individually exceed £5000 at cost are included in the balance sheet at historic cost less depreciation and any impairment in accordance with FRS 102.

Fixed Assets are depreciated over the period of their useful lives as follows:

Land	not depreciated
Buildings	2.5% straight line
Equipment	10% straight line
Computers	25% straight line
Vehicles - cars and vans	15% straight line

Depreciation for specialist conservation equipment with limited resale value would normally be depreciated over the lifetime of the project in which they are used.

Grants

Government and other grants are recognised at the fair value of the asset received or receivable. Grants are not recognised until there is reasonable assurance that the charity will comply with the conditions attaching to them and the grants will be received.

Foreign currency

Transactions in foreign currencies are translated at rates prevailing at the date of the transaction.

Pensions

Ulster Wildlife operates a defined contribution pension scheme and matches employee contributions to the scheme at a maximum rate of 9% of salary.

Taxation

The organisation is a registered charity with HMRC and is therefore not liable for taxation to the extent that any surplus or gains arising are wholly applied to its charitable objects.

The company is registered for VAT. Much of the income is either exempt or outside the scope of VAT.

Consequently, it is not possible to recover most of the VAT incurred on expenditure. Income and expenditure are shown exclusive of recoverable VAT.

Notes to the accounts

3 Donations & Legacies

	Unrestricted Funds 2024 £	Restricted Funds 2024 £	Unrestricted Funds 2023 £	Restricted Funds 2023 £
Legacy & In Memory Giving	97,926	-	3,320	-
Membership Contributions inc. Gift Aid	428,802	-	416,757	-
Corporate Support	6,824	42,225	26,491	58,500
Other Gifts & Donations	8,024	11,464	6,141	14,147
	541,576	53,689	452,709	72,647

4 Conservation Grants

	Unrestricted Funds 2024 £	Restricted Funds 2024 £	Unrestricted Funds 2023 £	Restricted Funds 2023 £
DAERA Environment Fund	-	946,401	-	1,092,606
DAERA Maritime and Fisheries Fund	-	4,953	-	47,625
Department for Infrastructure Living Places and Spaces Fund	-	-	-	10,000
Environmental Farming Scheme	-	218,269	-	231,641
Esmée Fairbairn Foundation	-	128,919	-	103,250
EU- Interreg VA	-	211,516	-	247,531
Garfield Weston Foundation	-	-	-	30,000
Kreitman Foundation	-	-	-	11,600
Landfill Communities Fund	-	10,450	-	2,167
Marine Institute	-	2,507	-	1,623
Ministry of Defence	-	20,685	-	14,249
National Lottery Heritage Fund	-	-	-	116,438
Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts	-	200,000	-	10,000
Swire Charitable Trust	-	50,000	-	-
	-	1,793,700	-	1,918,730

5 Landfill Environmental Projects

	Unrestricted Funds 2024 £	Restricted Funds 2024 £	Unrestricted Funds 2023 £	Restricted Funds 2023 £
Landfill Contributions Received	-	299,134	-	227,085
	-	299,134	-	227,085
<u>Expenditure</u>				
Entrust Administration Fee	-	10,111	-	8,084
Direct Project Expenditure	-	194,251	-	276,178
Direct Costs	26,288	-	20,166	-
	26,288	204,362	20,166	284,262

Notes to the accounts

6 Education & Training Grants

	Unrestricted Funds 2024 £	Restricted Funds 2024 £	Unrestricted Funds 2023 £	Restricted Funds 2023 £
Department for Communities (Job Start Scheme)	-	-	-	60,471
Department for Communities (Covid Recovery Employment and Skills Initiative for Heritage)	-	35,399	-	44,249
Education Authority	-	(2,688)	-	7,445
European Solidarity Corps	-	-	-	13,201
National Lottery Community Fund (Our Environment, Our Future)	-	-	-	22,768
National Lottery Community Fund (People & Communities)	-	60,520	-	74,761
National Lottery Community Fund (Empowering Young People 3)	-	60,863	-	61,282
National Lottery Heritage Fund (NextDoor Nature)	-	45,172	-	29,478
National Lottery Heritage Fund (New to Nature)	-	29,737	-	-
Belfast City Council	-	999	-	-
	-	230,002	-	313,655

7 Interest Received

Interest received in Restricted Funds is the interest earned on landfill tax receipts held prior to disbursement, and interest received which is used to fund expenditure on nature reserves. Interest received in unrestricted funds is bank interest earned on other cash balances.

8 Other Income

	Unrestricted Funds 2024 £	Restricted Funds 2024 £	Unrestricted Funds 2023 £	Restricted Funds 2023 £
Esmée Fairbairn Foundation Core Funding	75,000	-	110,000	-
Consultancy	28,786	-	20,198	-
Sundry income	52,977	101,718	46,620	41,880
	156,763	101,718	176,818	41,880

9 Expenditure on Raising Donations & Legacies

	Unrestricted Funds 2024 £	Restricted Funds 2024 £	Unrestricted Funds 2023 £	Restricted Funds 2023 £
Travel	5	-	62	-
Professional Fees	-	-	92	-
Printed Materials, Misc	17,516	-	14,338	-
Wages & Salary Costs*	127,269	-	65,961	-
	144,790	-	80,453	-

* Increase in salary costs related to planned restructure in the membership team to grow income in future years.

Notes to the accounts

10 Charitable Activities

	Unrestricted Funds 2024 £	Restricted Funds 2024 £	Total Funds 2024 £	Total Funds 2023 £
Landfill Environmental Projects	26,288	204,362	230,650	304,429
Nature Conservation	177,186	1,218,861	1,396,047	1,582,924
Environmental Education & Training	72,222	172,776	244,998	231,842
Membership Support Costs	109,578	-	109,578	106,115
Organisation Support Costs	295,371	68,436	363,807	369,663
Depreciation	16,161	24,321	40,482	29,773
Bank Interest & Charges	5,085	-	5,085	5,109
Auditors Remuneration	4,336	-	4,336	4,725
(Profit)/Loss on Disposal of Fixed Asset	-	-	-	(841)
	706,227	1,688,756	2,394,983	2,633,739

11 Expenditure on Charitable Activities

	Staff Costs £	Other direct costs £	2024 £	2023 £
Landfill Environmental Projects	22,370	208,280	230,650	304,428
Nature Conservation	779,733	616,314	1,396,047	1,582,924
Environmental Education	214,924	30,074	244,998	231,843
Membership Support Costs	47,963	61,616	109,579	106,115
Organisation Support Costs	224,837	138,969	363,806	369,663
Other- Depreciation, Bank Charges, Audit.	-	49,903	49,903	38,766
	1,289,827	1,105,156	2,394,983	2,633,739

Other Direct costs Environmental Projects	Landfill Environmental Projects £	Nature Conservation Projects £	Environmental Education Projects £	Membership & Organisation Support Costs £	Total £
Direct Project Costs	204,362	140,051	15,851	20,634	380,898
Premises Costs	3,853	32,395	1,792	47,546	85,586
Postage, Printing & Stationery	-	4,615	197	47,698	52,510
Staff Travel and Vehicle Costs	65	54,413	1,785	15,813	72,076
Contracted Services	-	341,488	6,079	26,775	374,342
Staff Training	-	13,883	3,831	1,701	19,415
Council Costs	-	-	-	5,947	5,947
Information Technology	-	29,469	539	34,471	64,479
	208,280	616,314	30,074	200,585	1,055,253

Notes to the accounts

12 Depreciation

	Unrestricted Funds 2024 £	Restricted Funds 2024 £	Unrestricted Funds 2023 £	Restricted Funds 2023 £
Motor Vehicles	2,157	15,629	3,499	12,270
Equipment	5,759	8,692	5,759	-
Buildings	8,245	-	8,245	-
	16,161	24,321	17,503	12,270

13 Staff Costs

	2024 £	2023 £
Salaries and Wages	1,220,458	1,044,198
Social Security Costs	109,549	93,964
Pension Contributions	87,090	64,617
	1,417,097	1,202,779

One employee received emoluments of more than £60,000. The average number of employees during the year, calculated on the basis of full time equivalents, was 37.9 (2023- 33.6).

The key management personnel comprise the trustees and the members of the senior management team.

The total employee benefits of the key management personnel was £202,497. (2023: £287,960).

14 Transfer Between Funds

	2024 £	2023 £
Landfill Fund Administration Costs	26,288	20,166
Project Contribution to Organisation Support Costs	134,439	213,101
Match Funding for DAERA Funding	(9,160)	(10,005)
	151,567	223,262

15 Board Remuneration and Related Party Transactions

No members of the Board received any remuneration during the year in their capacity as Trustees.

No travel and subsistence costs were paid on behalf of trustees during the year. (2023 £NIL).

No travel and subsistence costs were paid to trustees during the year. (2023 £NIL).

No trustees received payment for professional services supplied to the charity (2023 £NIL).

No balances are owed to trustees at 31st March 2024.

Notes to the accounts

16 Fixed Assets

	Nature Reserves £	Land & Buildings £	Motor Vehicles £	Equipment & Computers £	TOTAL £
COST OR VALUATION					
At 1 April 2023	1,240,158	589,355	171,863	158,795	2,160,171
Additions	-	-	49,538	23,088	72,626
Disposals	-	-	-	-	-
At 31 March 2024	1,240,158	589,355	221,401	181,883	2,232,797
DEPRECIATION					
At 1 April 2023	-	173,530	100,387	59,513	333,430
Charge for year	-	8,245	18,457	14,450	41,152
Disposals	-	-	-	-	-
At 31 March 2024	-	181,775	118,844	73,963	374,582
NBV at 31 March 2024	1,240,158	407,580	102,557	107,920	1,858,215
including restricted assets of	1,200,158	150,000	101,092	101,313	1,552,563

Glendun farm has been included at probate value of £150,000.

17 Debtors

	Unrestricted Funds 2024 £	Restricted Funds 2024 £	Unrestricted Funds 2023 £	Restricted Funds 2023 £
Debtors and Prepayments	142,650	155,070	85,958	73,530
Grants	135,227	83,656	-	48,342
Tax Refunds Due	19,042	-	18,976	-
	296,919	238,726	104,934	121,872

18 Creditors Falling Due Within One Year

	Unrestricted Funds 2024 £	Restricted Funds 2024 £	Unrestricted Funds 2023 £	Restricted Funds 2023 £
Sundry Creditors and Accrued Expenditure	208,608	117,882	151,549	439,682

19 Creditors Falling Due After More Than One Year

	Unrestricted Funds 2024 £	Restricted Funds 2024 £	Unrestricted Funds 2023 £	Restricted Funds 2023 £
Capital Grants	7,436	342,816	8,107	342,816

Notes to the accounts

20 Movement on Unrestricted Funds

	Unrestricted Funds 2024 £	Unrestricted Funds 2023 £
Opening Balance	989,251	988,414
Surplus for the Year	57,095	23,158
Transfer to Fund for the Future	-	(22,321)
Closing Balance	1,046,346	989,251

21 Movement on Restricted Funds

	Restricted Funds 2024 £	Restricted Funds 2023 £
Opening Balance	1,989,544	1,485,935
Net Income/([Expenditure]) for the year	652,519	500,417
Transfer from/(to) Fund for the Future	-	3,192
Closing Balance	2,642,063	1,989,544

Some funders pay in advance and other funders issue payment only after the expenditure has been incurred. The movement on restricted funds in any year is a result of timing differences between receipts of grants for restricted projects and the related expenditure.

22 Movement on Fund for the Future

	Designated Fund for the Funds 2024 £	Designated Fund for the Funds 2023 £
Opening Balance	209,486	190,357
Transfer from Donations and Legacies	-	22,321
UW Contribution to the Purchase of Land	-	(3,192)
Closing Balance	209,486	209,486

Fund for the Future includes monies from gifts in wills and legacy donations and other donations, including restricted donations. It will be used to purchase and manage nature reserves, protect key species as well as educate and support future wildlife champions.

23 Contingent Liability

A portion of grants received may become repayable if the charity fails to comply with the terms of the relevant letters of offer.

24 Taxation

As a charity, Ulster Wildlife Trust is exempt from tax on income and gains to the extent that these are applied to its charitable objects. Ulster Wildlife is registered for VAT in relation to some specific taxable supplies. The net amount payable on taxable supplies was £17,525 in the period (2023 £13,496).

25 Company Status

Ulster Wildlife Trust Limited is a private company limited by guarantee and consequently does not have share capital. Each of the members is liable to contribute an amount not exceeding £1 towards the assets of the company in the event of liquidation.



Welcoming new barn owl chicks at David Sandford's farm in Co. Down



Ulster Wildlife is Northern Ireland's largest local nature conservation charity. We are working to bring nature back across Northern Ireland and secure a wilder future where people and nature are thriving together.

Join now and together we can make a real difference
www.ulsterwildlife.org/join

Get in touch

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- 📘 facebook.com/ulsterwildlife
- 📷 instagram.com/ulsterwildlife
- 🌐 linkedin.com/company/ulster-wildlife

We are proud to be one of **46 independent Wildlife Trusts** working across the UK



Ulster Wildlife Trust, (operating as Ulster Wildlife) is registered with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland NIC101848 and is a not-for-profit company incorporated in Northern Ireland, limited by guarantee NI 12711.

Ulster Wildlife Trust

Northern Ireland - Charity number 101848

Annual report

Our Year for Nature, People and Climate

Ulster Wildlife Trust

Annual Report & Accounts 23-24



**Ulster
Wildlife**



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Foreword

As we reflect on the year April 2023 to March 2024, we do so with a sense of pride for all that has been achieved in turning the tide from nature loss to recovery and driving meaningful action for people and climate.

Forging ahead with our Strategy to 2030, we have made significant progress against our ambitious goals and transformations under the leadership of our late CEO Jennifer Fulton, who sadly passed away in May 2024. From addressing climate change through nature-based solutions and supporting farmers to deliver for wildlife, to community-based action for wildlife on the ground, we have played a leading role in ensuring the value of nature is recognised and action is taken for it to recover. Jennifer's legacy will continue to live on in the many initiatives she spearheaded to help nature recover. More recently, we were saddened at the passing of board member Joe Breen after a short illness. We pay tribute to Joe for his marine expertise and guidance – he will be sorely missed by us all. A full tribute to Jennifer and Joe can be found on page 4.

Landscape-scale recovery reached new heights as our peatland restoration work and team expanded during the year, enabling us to restore more of these precious habitats across Northern Ireland. This is not only vital in helping to combat climate change but also reduces flood risk, improves water quality and boosts biodiversity.

Species recovery gained momentum with one of the most successful breeding years for barn owls since our conservation work began. Additionally, we celebrated the phenomenal expansion of pine martens and the remarkable return of breeding ospreys to Co. Fermanagh.

Public support and desire for a healthy natural world have manifested in many ways: from the amazing transformations of community spaces driven by our Nextdoor Nature programme and the enthusiasm for our youth-engagement initiatives to the thousands who have joined our 'Let Nature In' wildlife gardening initiative. Support continues to grow rapidly, with more members and an expanding volunteer base, establishing a real force for change.

All of this is made possible thanks to dedication and unstinting efforts of our staff and volunteer team, and our skilled Board Members, alongside you: our members, supporters, funders and partners. Your role in the fight against the twin nature and climate crises is vital. We look forward buoyed by the successes over this last year and confident that there is much more we can achieve together for local wildlife and wild places.



John Witchell
Chair of Ulster Wildlife

Tribute to Jennifer and Joe



Jennifer Fulton,
Chief Executive 2012-2024

Jennifer joined Ulster Wildlife as Chief Executive in 2012 and led the charity with unwavering passion, energy, and dedication, championing our efforts for nature's recovery. During her 12-year tenure, Jennifer made a profound impact on nature conservation, climate action, and community engagement in Northern Ireland, laying the groundwork for significant progress in reversing nature loss and promoting recovery efforts. One of her early accomplishments was securing new office premises for the charity at McClelland House in 2015, ensuring the organisation had a stable base from which to grow. With a background in agriculture, Jennifer recognised the crucial role of farmers in nature's recovery. She was instrumental in developing Ulster Wildlife's Environmental Farming Scheme Group programme in Fermanagh, which now involves over 500 members managing more than 50,000 hectares of land for nature.

Her foresight into the importance of nature-based solutions in combating climate change led to a major peatland restoration initiative across Northern Ireland and cross-border from 2017 to 2022. This work has since become a core focus for the organisation, with ongoing restoration efforts. Jennifer also championed marine conservation, particularly the role of blue carbon habitats like seagrass and shellfish beds, overseeing the establishment of Northern Ireland's first native oyster nursery in 2022.

Her commitment to sustainability was evident in her efforts to



© Jennifer with HRH King Charles at the launch of the UK Squirrel Accord

drive Ulster Wildlife toward net zero by 2030, including creating a sustainability policy to reduce carbon emissions. Jennifer's landscape-scale approach to conservation led to the acquisition of significant nature reserves, including Glenullin Bog and Haughey's Bog, and the expansion of Slievenacloy to create a larger, more connected space for nature. This approach also influenced collaboration with the Department for Infrastructure to promote biodiversity along road networks.

She was a strong advocate for species conservation, particularly for the red squirrel. Jennifer led a UK-wide conservation project and sat on the advisory group for the UK Squirrel Accord, positioning Ulster Wildlife as a leader in this area. Her science-first approach saw her challenge DAERA's proposed badger cull, advocating for more ethical alternatives.

Jennifer's passion for inspiring young environmental leaders was evident in her development of the Grassroots Challenge programme, engaging hundreds of young people in nature conservation. She also managed an education programme with Belfast City Council, connecting thousands of schoolchildren with nature.

Jennifer's leadership helped Ulster Wildlife navigate the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic, ensuring the charity emerged stronger. Her passing is a significant loss, but her legacy of collaboration, leadership and progress will continue to inspire the charity and its supporters.



Joe Breen,
Board Member 2022-2024

Joe Breen OBE was a passionate advocate for marine conservation and a dedicated environmentalist whose work has left an enduring legacy. Joe became a Board Member of Ulster Wildlife following his retirement from DAERA's Marine Division, and brought an invaluable depth of marine science expertise to the charity and was an unwavering champion for nature.

Throughout his distinguished career, Joe was recognised for his remarkable contributions to marine conservation and environmental protection, earning him the prestigious OBE. His impact on marine conservation was profound; he began his career as a diver and scientist at Ulster Museum, managed the Exploris Aquarium, and later led a team at DAERA investigating damage to the unique horse mussel beds in Strangford Lough. Joe's efforts were instrumental in protecting the wildlife and seabed around Northern Ireland's coast, ensuring that these vital ecosystems were preserved for future generations.

Joe's knowledge, expertise, and passion for marine life were unmatched, and his contributions will be greatly missed by all who had the privilege of working with him. His commitment to protecting our natural world, particularly the rich marine environments he loved so dearly, will continue to inspire those who follow in his footsteps.

Highlights of our year for wildlife



© Simon Gray

April 23

Hughes Insurance supports 'Let Nature In' campaign

We partnered with Hughes Insurance to launch our 'Let Nature In' campaign, encouraging 5,000 households across Northern Ireland to participate in our annual wildlife gardening initiative. This campaign is crucial, as one in nine species in Northern Ireland, including once-common garden visitors like hedgehogs and house sparrows, is at risk of extinction. With support from Hughes, we created an engaging information pack, complete with wildflower seeds, to help people get started. Sign up now at ulstewildlife.org/let-nature-in.



© Ronald Surgenor

May 23

Glenarm gets new native oyster nursery

Native oysters, one of our most threatened marine species, are set to flourish once more along the Glenarm coast with the establishment of our new native oyster nursery at Glenarm Marina. The nursery, housing over 800 mature native oysters suspended in cages, could see millions of larvae released into surrounding waters every year. This initiative aims to help these ocean superheroes bounce back from the brink of extinction, boosting biodiversity, improving water quality and reducing pollution levels – a win-win for people and nature's recovery.



© Mike Snelle

June 23

Phenomenal resurgence of the native pine marten

Our survey of pine martens, red squirrels and grey squirrels revealed that the presence of pine martens in woodlands has nearly doubled over the past five years. Once common throughout Northern Ireland, pine martens experienced a significant decline due to habitat loss and persecution in the 19th century. Today, they are found across all six counties, indicating a significant expansion beyond their traditional stronghold in County Fermanagh. This resurgence is promising news for red squirrels, which have adapted to coexist with these native predators, unlike invasive grey squirrels.



© Andy Rouse 2020VISION

July 23

Endangered lapwing return to Co Down bog

Endangered lapwings made a return to a Co. Down bog for the first time in many years. Two breeding pairs were discovered at Lecale Fens Special Area of Conservation, thanks to our restoration work with local farmer John Crea. Like many other ground-nesting birds, lapwings have suffered major declines over the last 40 years owing to habitat loss and changes in farming practices. Our work eliminating invasive species and scrub has helped to rejuvenate this designated peatland site, making it an attractive breeding ground for this red-listed species.



© Ronald Surgenor

August 23

Ospreys breed in Ireland for the first time in over 200 years

A pair of ospreys successfully bred at a confidential nest site in Co. Fermanagh, marking the first occurrence in Ireland in over 200 years! This magnificent bird of prey, also known as the fish hawk, naturally re-colonised the area and produced at least two, possibly three, chicks – the first known wild osprey chicks on the island of Ireland in modern times. The historic discovery was made by Giles Knight, our Environmental Farming Scheme Advisor, who had been observing the breeding pair for the last three seasons alongside his local farm visits.



September 23

Cows with collars transform conservation efforts at Slievenacloy

At Slievenacloy Nature Reserve in the Belfast Hills, over 25 conservation cattle were equipped with state-of-the-art GPS collars to aid in the restoration of this designated grassland site and enhance biodiversity. These collars allow us to guide the cattle into specific areas within the 258-hectare Area of Special Scientific Interest where grazing is most needed, using audio signals, all managed via an app. Already, the cattle have started to open up the grassland and increase the diversity of the habitat by making space for a greater variety of wildflowers, such as orchids.

Highlights of our year for wildlife



October 23

Wave of support from Wilson Resources

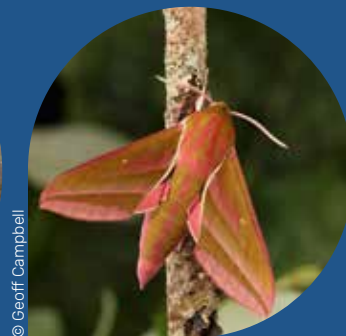
Thanks to a generous donation from Wilson Resources, we have been able to offer a one-year graduate marine conservation internship, to work with our marine team on blue carbon and species restoration projects. As well as providing an additional staffing resource, our marine intern will gain valuable, hands-on experience and training to progress their future career in the sector. This support builds on Wilson Resources' ongoing contributions to our blue carbon habitat restoration efforts, including their donations to our native oyster nurseries.



November 23

Haughey's Bog set to be transformed

We partnered with the An Creagán Centre to transform a former commercially harvested bog near Omagh into Northern Ireland's first demonstration hub for peatland restoration. Over the next ten years, more than 30 hectares of severely degraded habitat – equivalent to 74 football pitches – will be restored to help bring nature back, improve water quality, reduce flood risk and combat climate change. By employing best practice techniques, we will rewet and revitalise Haughey's Bog, allowing plants and wildlife to recover and enabling the site to function as a carbon sink.



© Geoff Campbell

December 23

Appeal launched to safeguard nature's havens

We launched our annual fundraising appeal to raise vital funds to safeguard the 18 precious wildlife havens in our care. From wildflower-rich grasslands to ancient woodlands, our nature reserves provide a vital refuge for wildlife such as red squirrels and orchids to survive, thrive and spread across the countryside. Thanks to the generosity of our members and supporters, we raised over £10,000. This support will help us continue our vital work from carrying out practical conservation tasks and maintaining access to surveying wildlife.



January 24

Barn owls defy odds with surprise winter brood

A pair of barn owls at Ballycruttle Farm, near Downpatrick, made January headlines by welcoming an unusually late winter brood. Four healthy chicks were discovered by our species conservation team in November, marking the latest known barn owl brood in Northern Ireland to date. Typically, barn owl eggs in Northern Ireland are laid in April, with chicks fledging in June or July. Despite the challenges posed by wet weather and floods, the owls defied the odds. All four chicks were ringed in partnership with British Trust for Ornithology and RSPB NI before successfully fledging in December.



February 24

Partnership for peatlands underway

We're helping to facilitate a new Peatland Collaborative and Technical Network to enhance collaboration among organisations involved in peatland restoration. Peatlands are one of Northern Ireland's greatest natural assets, storing over half of our land-based carbon, filtering water and providing habitat for iconic wildlife. However, over 80% are in poor condition. Restoring peatlands is a cost-effective solution to the nature and climate crises. The Network will coordinate actions, share knowledge and standardise monitoring methods, ensuring accurate reporting and supporting future restoration efforts.



© Andy Mearns

March 24

Power NI partners for species action

We renewed our partnership with Power NI, with a focus on protecting three native species – the barn owl, red squirrel and hedgehog – and their habitats across Northern Ireland. Through financial support and public outreach, we aim to encourage the public to help with species conservation by recording sightings and raising awareness of actions they can take to help. This builds upon our successful peatland partnership with Power NI, which provided financial support for restoration initiatives and helped to raise public awareness about the importance of peatlands and their role in mitigating climate change.

Bringing nature back

Our new strategy to put nature into recovery by 2030 has ambitious goals and builds upon our work over the last 45 years to deliver impactful change for nature. It drives us towards our vision of a wilder future, where everyone is inspired to get involved in nature's recovery, and where wildlife plays a key role in addressing the nature and climate emergencies. Although it is a bold and complex challenge, it is a necessity — and the solution to the very real and present dangers that nature and people face in the midst of a climate and nature emergency.

Our ability to galvanize people to take action, to work collaboratively to achieve the greatest impact for nature, and our knowledge, experience, 'localness' and innovative ways of working, are our core strengths. Together, and with the support of local communities, farmers, landowners, businesses, and our members who stand with us, we are in the best place possible to turn our vision into a reality — and ensure the recovery of our natural world.

Public Benefit

- The Trustees of Ulster Wildlife have taken into account the Charity Commission's guidance on Public Benefit, and consider it fully when planning and reviewing the charity's actions and outcomes and in planning our future activities.
- This Trustees' Report shows how we performed against our strategic outcomes in 2023/24.
- Ulster Wildlife's charitable objectives as set out in our Articles of Association can be found on page 33.

Our Vision

A wilder future where people and nature are thriving together

Our Purpose

Our purpose is to protect and restore nature on land and at sea. We will play our part in ending the climate and ecological emergencies, creating a society where nature is valued and is part of our daily lives.

Our Strategic Outcomes for 2030

1. NATURE - Nature is in recovery and wildlife is thriving across Northern Ireland.

2. PEOPLE - More people are taking positive action for nature and climate and are benefitting from time spent in nature.

3. CLIMATE - Nature-based solutions are playing a central role in addressing climate change.

Outcome 1 Nature

Nature is in recovery and wildlife is thriving across Northern Ireland

With one in nine species at risk of extinction here, we need to reverse the decline and bring nature back. It has become clear that protecting what we have left is no longer enough. It is our aim to create new spaces for nature by connecting habitats and restoring landscapes, and by working collaboratively to help species and habitats recover.

850 hectares of land managed for wildlife (equivalent to 1190 football pitches)

500 farmers and landowners received advice

50k ha of farms whose management we influenced.

21 barn owl nest-boxes erected in key locations this year.



One of the barn owl chicks in Co. Down.



Barn Owls

In 2023, our barn owl conservation efforts saw remarkable success with several exciting developments in our work to help these iconic farmland birds recover.

This year, we celebrated the highest number of known fledgling chicks in Northern Ireland, from both sites we monitor and sites monitored by others. This was thanks to a successful breeding season and the formation of new pairs. An unexpected highlight was a very late brood in Co. Down in late 2023.

We worked closely with many landowners to help provide the optimal conditions for barn owls to thrive which culminated in the development of our new guidance document 'Improving Land for Barn Owls'. Twenty-one nest boxes were erected in strategic locations using 'Nature Recovery Network' principles and our very first nest camera was installed to gather valuable data on the secret lives of these elusive birds, with more added throughout the winter in preparation for the 2024 breeding season.

Our newly implemented sightings database is proving effective, and we received nearly 120 records of both barn owls and long-eared owls across the 2023/24 season.

Additionally, we conducted various talks and events to educate youth groups, the general public and farmers about barn owls and the challenges they face. In partnership with RSPB NI and the Northern Ireland Raptor Study Group, we organised an event for farmers and landowners. We also shared barn owl knowledge with the British Trust for Ornithology, BirdWatch Ireland and the Barn Owl Trust.

Red squirrel © Adam Gerrard



Red Squirrels

We released the results from our 2022 Squirrel and Pine Marten Survey which revealed a significant increase in pine marten presence across Northern Ireland. This long-term data is crucial for assessing trends and guiding conservation efforts to protect red squirrels.

Our newly implemented sightings database has proven effective, with nearly 700 records of red squirrels, grey squirrels and pine martens since its launch last year. These records are invaluable and identified six woodlands in 2023 where red squirrels appeared for the first time.

We met with all of the red squirrel volunteer groups to explore how we could further support their indispensable conservation work. We also engaged with all of the local council biodiversity officers to enhance the protection of red squirrels on their properties. Collaborations with NIEA, the Northern Ireland Squirrel Forum and the UK Squirrel Accord continue to drive efforts to restore red squirrels to their former range.

Throughout the year, we held various talks to raise awareness about red squirrels and participated in a successful Red Squirrel Awareness Week in October.

Finally, we teamed up again with Belfast Zoo, NIEA and the National Trust to carry out a further release of red squirrels at Castle Ward estate, near Strangford.

MSc student Helen Peck with hedgehog home



Hedgehogs

We continued our collaboration with NUI Galway on the Irish Hedgehog Survey, to help find out more about these much-loved mammals, primarily promoting hedgehog sightings.

We eagerly await the results from the three-year Irish Hedgehog Survey and look forward to sharing insights on the state of our local hedgehog population. Additionally, we hosted an MSc student from Queen's University Belfast to conduct a density study using camera traps to assess hedgehog populations in various habitats, including gardens, woodlands and farmland.

We have also been raising awareness of hedgehogs and encouraging people to create hedgehog-friendly gardens through our 'Let Nature In' wildlife gardening programme, which we re-launched with sponsorship from Hughes Insurance. As hedgehogs increasingly rely on urban environments, our gardens play a crucial role in their protection. Through these efforts, we aim to foster safer and more welcoming habitats for this charismatic species.

Orchids at the Umbra Nature Reserve



Nature Reserves

Our nature reserves cover nearly 850 hectares of land spread across 19 sites that include some of Northern Ireland's most important habitats and species. The integration of technology has played an increasingly vital role in the management and protection of these special places during the year.

From simple GPS habitat mapping to satellite tracking of grazing animals and high-quality trail cameras, innovative techniques are enhancing our conservation efforts. Looking ahead, AI technology is expected to further revolutionise our approach. However, many tasks still require traditional hard work and physical effort.

This year's conservation highlights included mowing part of the dune slacks at Umbra and clearing the glades at Straidkilly to help wildflowers and pollinators flourish, haloing ancient oaks at Glenarm to prolong their survival and removing rats from the Isle of Muck to safeguard the seabird colony. These activities, along with countless other efforts, contribute significantly not only to conserving habitats and species but also to enhancing their resilience against emerging threats such as invasive species and climate change.

We adopted the 'Nature Recovery Network' approach to the management of our nature reserves, evaluating how they function within the wider landscape and their role in fostering a healthy environment. Maintaining these vital sites demands considerable effort from our dedicated staff team and volunteers, alongside support from our members and funders.

Nature Recovery Networks

We've continued to support the development of ways to create 'more, bigger, better and joined-up' wildlife-rich spaces by working with key stakeholders. Additionally, we have turned our focus inwards to strategically implement these 'Nature Recovery Network' principles at Ulster Wildlife for the benefit of both wildlife and people.

Over the past year, we have been exploring the establishment of Nature Recovery Zones (NRZs) around key nature reserves. This approach, originally developed by the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, involves collaborating closely with neighbouring landowners and farmers to expand wildlife-friendly areas beyond the boundaries of existing nature reserves, effectively creating 'super reserves.'

In March 2024, we visited Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust to meet with key staff and to learn more about how this approach is being implemented on the ground. The visit provided valuable insights and plenty of ideas which we can consider in Northern Ireland. By focusing on NRZs, we aim to create larger, interconnected habitats that support greater biodiversity and resilience. This initiative represents a significant step forward in our commitment to conservation and the creation of thriving, connected ecosystems.

Knowledge exchange trip to Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust



Skylark © Stefan Johansson



Protected Sites

Our collaborative efforts with the Ministry of Defence (MOD) to manage Ballykinler and Magilligan Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) continue to yield positive results, enhancing the biodiversity of these important nature sites.

To protect the unique dune and grassland habitats, dense stands of gorse, sea buckthorn and bracken, that inhibit the growth of crucial plant species, have been systematically removed. Recognising the importance of scrub as a component of dune habitat, some areas have intentionally been left intact to provide food and shelter for birds, mammals and invertebrates. Additionally, we have worked closely with the sites' graziers, developing grazing plans that include optimal grazing practices for sheep and cattle to maintain the key species found in these habitats.

Our monitoring efforts of priority species continued at both sites, including skylark, meadow pipit, petalwort, and the scarce crimson and gold moth. This year, we have enjoyed fruitful partnerships with Butterfly Conservation, Buglife, Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust, and other stakeholders, all of whom contribute to the essential conservation work at these MOD-owned sites.

Environmental Farming Scheme

In 2023, our Environmental Farming Scheme (EFS) Group Programme, funded by DAERA, entered its seventh year and continued to grow, hitting a landmark 500 members. The scheme is designed to support farmers to deliver nature conservation at scale through agri-environment schemes.

We collaborated with 80 farmers to create new EFS Agreements, positively managing over 4,000 hectares of land and injecting an additional half a million pounds annually into rural communities. This has brought the number of EFS Agreements in our group to over 350, representing nearly a quarter of all EFS Higher Agreements across Northern Ireland.

We have also improved our service to farmers, by continuing to specialise in grassland and peatland management and bringing in RSPB NI as a Group partner to support farmers fortunate enough to have curlew and other breeding waders on their land.

As farming policy rapidly evolves with an increasing focus on carbon and efficiency, we have engaged our members through environmental education programmes and farm walks, helping them understand the impacts of these new policies and make informed decisions to maximise their benefits within their own farming systems.

Our collaboration with the Leitrim Sustainable Agriculture Group has allowed us to share experiences of High Nature Value farming and explore best practices across two neighbouring counties with similar land types but different policy regimes. This partnership has provided farmers with cross-border funding and training initiatives, enhancing their resilience in the face of global market pressures, climate change and diseases such as bTB.

The successor to the Environmental Farming Scheme, 'Farming with Nature,' was included in recent policy announcements. Drawing on our extensive experience with current and past schemes, we have contributed to the co-design of this new initiative, working with farming bodies, other eNGOs, and DAERA. Our efforts have focused on assessing the benefits of the Group approach for farmer uptake, understanding and compliance with EFS Higher. We have demonstrated increased scheme uptake with Group support and targeted coverage of protected habitats and species. Additionally, we have identified barriers to scheme entry and are collaborating with the Department to ensure future schemes are accessible, rewarding and beneficial for wildlife.

Engaging with farmers through EFS and the Leitrim Sustainable Agriculture Group; Marsh Trillory © Simon Gray

Public Affairs, Policy and Legislation

The return of the NI Executive in February 2024 was welcome news, and will enable us to step-up our engagement with key politicians, Ministers and decision-makers in the coming year.

During 2023/24, we responded to several key government consultations, including Wildfires in Northern Ireland, the DFI Resource Budget Equality Impact Assessment, and the Carbon Budget. Additionally, we submitted evidence as part of the Office for Environmental Protection's review of protected sites in Northern Ireland. Our involvement continued in the input and co-design of the new 'Farming with Nature' agri-environment scheme being developed by DAERA.

Despite our evidence and significant concerns regarding the impacts on marine biodiversity, the legal challenge for the Islandmagee Gas Storage project was dismissed. However, this was eventually overturned by an appeal in June 2024.

As a leading member of the Northern Ireland Marine Task Force (NIMTF), we participated in several consultations to ensure NI's marine environment is healthy, resilient, and productive. This included advocating for a ban on the sale of plastic-containing wet wipes in the UK, which was successful. Our response to the Office for Environmental Protection's Call for Evidence on Marine Drivers and Pressures to the UK Achieving Good Environmental Status emphasised the importance of the marine environment. Additionally, we continued to engage with the development of the Offshore Renewable Energy Action Plan and Climate Sectoral plans in conjunction with the Department for the Economy.

Farming with Nature: The Flanagan's Farm

Overlooking the shores of Lough Melvin, the Flanagan family has farmed in this corner of Fermanagh for generations. Their superb species-rich grasslands exemplify 'High Nature Value' farmland. For 7 years, the family have been members of our Environmental Farming Scheme (EFS) Group Programme, which supports farmers' efforts to deliver nature conservation at scale.

Through successive agri-environment regimes, traditional management has created fields and meadows teeming with flowering plants and buzzing with pollinators. As Brian takes over from his father Bennie, he is justifiably proud of the wildlife these fields support. His approach is as much second nature as it is High Nature Value; he knows these fields intimately.

Brian is an enthusiastic and engaged member of our EFS Group. He finds that Group meetings add significant value to farm visits. The flexible Group design allows farmers to learn and share their experiences collectively while offering valuable two-way feedback during one-on-one mentoring sessions, free from fear of censure. Annual 'Condition Assessments', a complimentary service for members, provide helpful insights, enabling farmers to participate in the scheme confidently and avoid inspection difficulties.

Speaking about how EFS complements his farming style, Brian said, "Scheme payments offer a regular and welcome additional income stream but can conflict with increasingly variable annual conditions. In short, it feels like farming to the calendar, not the season. Pre-set cutting dates and restrictions on even light dressings of nutrients sometimes present a challenge to delivering environmental benefits. Harbours the rare blue-eyed grass can be both a pain and a privilege!"

Compliance and financial benefits are only part of the story. Brian emphasised, "As a family, we have always managed our farm according to its yearly needs. The presence of 37 plant species in a quadrat is a testament to this. Any new scheme needs to acknowledge and encourage our ability to deliver, rather than simply dictating how to do it."

As DAERA's new agri-environment scheme awaits in the wings, Brian is considering his options. "Any scheme must be appealing to significant numbers of High Nature Value farmers. We should be able to deliver both biodiversity and carbon capture. The support offered by Ulster Wildlife, combined with a more results-based approach, is central to future success."

Brian Flanagan inspecting his fields and wildflower meadows, which are teeming with life



The rare blue-eyed grass – one of the many wildflowers thriving on the Flanagan's farm

Outcome 2 People

More people are taking positive action for nature and climate and are benefitting from time spent in nature

Without more people taking action themselves, the fight to protect nature and tackle the climate crisis is an insurmountable task. We need to engage and empower people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities to take action and stand up for nature, and also to reconnect people with wild places and green spaces. By increasing the number of people who can speak up for nature, our collective voice will be louder and reach further than ever before.

Corporate volunteers at Slieve Donard Nature Reserve

123 active
volunteers

13,669 members

3,800 people learned
about nature at
our events

2,380 gardens signed
up to our wildlife
gardening campaign

22 Youth Forum
members

Wild Youth participants enjoying a campfire at Bog Meadows Nature Reserve



Wild Youth

This innovative programme enhances the wellbeing of young people in and around the Belfast Hills through nature-based activities. Delivered in conjunction with Belfast Hills Partnership and funded by the National Lottery Community Fund, Wild Youth has made a significant impact.

This year, 252 young people, many from youth clubs in north and west Belfast, completed 2,380 hours of Wild Youth programming with Ulster Wildlife. Activities ranged from pond-dipping at our Bog Meadows Nature Reserve to hiking Cave Hill. Participants not only enjoyed nature-based fun but also reported feeling happier and eager to bring their families back to the local green spaces they explored with Wild Youth.

Additionally, we launched our first-ever Wild Youth Leader training, a weekend-long residential that provided nine young people with hands-on experience in leading their own nature-based wellbeing activities. This new initiative aims to empower young leaders to foster a deeper connection with nature within their communities.

Wildlife Watch celebration event at Bog Meadows Nature Reserve



Wildlife Watch Groups

Our Wildlife Watch Groups for children continue to flourish, with 47 members across three groups in Lisburn, Bloomfield and Bog Meadows.

These groups, run by dedicated volunteers, meet monthly to arrange fun and informative nature-based activities for children. This year, they have enjoyed bat walks and talks, wildflower planting, and learning all about birds at Orangefield Bird Day.

Ulster Wildlife's student placements have also helped out with the groups, teaching children how to spot wildlife from their windows and sharing insights about the small but mighty native oyster. A group celebration at our Bog Meadows Nature Reserve, in Belfast, allowed the children to explore and learn about its wildlife, making it a memorable event for all involved.

Youth Forum members at the COP28 Climate Change Rally in Belfast



Youth Forum

Our Youth Forum continues to thrive, with 22 active members providing a platform for young people to advocate for nature, participate in campaigns and take action for wildlife.

Throughout the year, members engaged in diverse activities such as birdwatching at Portmore Lough, learning about dragonflies at Montiagh's Moss, and assisting with red squirrel conservation. They also attended online talks and made their voices heard at the COP28 climate change rally in Belfast, where one member was invited to speak at the post-rally event. Additionally, Youth Forum members attended the Path to Net Zero event, contributing to Northern Ireland's first Climate Action Plan for 2023-2027, organised in conjunction with the EA Youth Service and DAERA.



Young people who attended the Binevenagh Youth Residential

Young people monitoring plants at the Binevenagh Youth Residential



Binevenagh Youth Residential

In 2023, twenty-two young people attended our week-long summer residential run in collaboration with the Magilligan Field Centre and Binevenagh Landscape Partnership.

Supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the residential provides young people with the opportunity to explore and connect with our nearby Umbra Nature Reserve while completing a range of activities to achieve their Gold Duke of Edinburgh's Award. Activities include everything from peatland restoration tasks and building barn owl boxes to pond maintenance.

Since 2017, Ulster Wildlife has helped over 150 young people earn their Gold Duke of Edinburgh's Award. The residential helps not only foster a love for nature but also equips young people with valuable conservation skills and a sense of achievement.

Moragaine, our New to Nature Reserves Assistant, using an Allen soythe



New to Nature

We welcomed two trainees last year as part of the New to Nature programme, funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. This initiative provided paid work placements and life-changing experiences for young people disadvantaged in the labour market, while building capacity in the environmental sector.

Over the past year, our Nature Reserves Assistant contributed significantly to protecting and conserving wildlife and wild places as a valued member of our Nature Reserves Team. Additionally, our Urban Green Spaces Assistant worked closely with the Community Engagement Team to build a community garden and nature pond at Bog Meadows Nature Reserve. They also assisted in running 'Wild Wellbeing' sessions for young people and helped bring communities together, providing the advice and support needed to help nature flourish on their doorstep and leave a lasting natural legacy.

The programme was delivered through a partnership of Groundwork, The Prince's Trust, Disability Rights UK, and Mission Diverse.

Bog Meadows community garden volunteers



Bog Meadows - Our People, Our Places

Our efforts to foster community buy-in and ownership at Bog Meadows Nature Reserve continued to thrive, thanks to the support from the National Lottery Community Fund.

Last year, we offered a diverse array of programmes, including nature connection sessions, wildlife walks, a summer scheme, school visits, adult and youth volunteering opportunities, and a Wildlife Watch group for children. One of the year's many highlights was the Winter Solstice Lantern Walk, where everyone came together to create a magical winter wonderland for families in the nature reserve.

Our women's group, the 'Meadow Ladies', has flourished, with members regularly monitoring butterflies and providing a wildlife-friendly support network and social space.

With a grant from the Department for Infrastructure, we collaborated with a dedicated team of gardening volunteers, local community groups and businesses to create a 'Community Wildlife Garden.' This inviting space showcases a functional wildlife garden and offers the community a valuable place to connect with nature through health and wellbeing activities.

Barnardos Mulch & Munch project which we are helping to facilitate



Nextdoor Nature

In our second and final year of this project, we continued to collaborate with communities in south and east Belfast, employing a community-led approach to help nature flourish and providing support for groups to take action on their own terms.

Several new groups joined us this year, including Barnardos, RNIB and Hello Neighbour Hello Nature, alongside existing groups Connswater Housing and Glentoran FC.

Barnardos is revitalising an underutilised green space, with local women creating a sensory garden for themselves and their children. RNIB has established a gardening club beside Glentoran Football Club, which was filmed by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. Our engagement with the Roma Community continues to grow and develop. Additionally, we are collaborating with Hello Neighbour, Hello Nature, based at the Mersey Street apartments, to create more wildlife-friendly gardens.

The marine team raising awareness of MPAs at a coastal festival



Marine Protected Areas Community Engagement

This year, we embarked on a mission to promote the importance of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in Northern Ireland and to raise awareness of their value in protecting special marine habitats, species and features.

Starting in early spring 2024, we organised a programme of outreach events to foster community engagement and inspire action. These events included rockpool rambles, beach cleans, educational workshops and participation in various coastal festivals. In March 2024, we brought together partner organisations for a Marine Recovery Workshop to ensure we deliver an informed and comprehensive message when engaging with the public.

By highlighting the unique marine life and habitats protected within MPAs, we aim to promote informed decision-making and empower local stakeholders to contribute to the better management of their MPAs for both people and nature.



Bullfinch © Simon Gray

'Let Nature In' wildlife gardening starter kit



Let Nature In

We relaunched 'Let Nature In,' our wildlife gardening campaign designed to encourage people to create spaces for nature in their gardens.

With support from Hughes Insurance, we produced a new wildlife gardening starter kit, offering advice on supporting birds, insects, hedgehogs and more. We also garnered significant media attention following the launch and ran a successful giveaway with Cool FM, raising campaign awareness and driving sign-ups.

We now have over 2,300 households committed to enhancing wildlife in their outdoor spaces. Alongside their starter packs, participants receive quarterly wildlife gardening update emails filled with tips and advice on the best ways to garden for nature.

Glenullin playpark funded by the Landfill Communities Fund



Landfill Communities Fund

We helped distribute £194,000 of Landfill Communities Fund contributions from Fermanagh and Omagh District Council and Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council to 13 community and environmental projects.

The Landfill Communities Fund (LCF) is a grant scheme that enables operators of landfill sites to contribute a portion of the monies they pay as landfill tax directly to approved Environmental Bodies, such as Ulster Wildlife, for distribution to projects of environmental and public benefit.

2023 saw an increase in project activity with the effects of the pandemic winding down. For the remaining lifespan of contributions from our two landfill operators, we will continue to maximise the benefits of distributing funding to projects which are aligned with our own strategic goals of promoting health and wellbeing through enjoyment of the environment and rebuilding biodiversity.



Volunteers planting trees at Bog Meadows Nature Reserve

Bee & Butterfly walk at Slievenacloy for Ulster Wildlife members



Volunteers repairing fence posts at Slievenacloy Nature Reserve



Exclusive Member Events

During the winter, we successfully delivered another series of online talks, featuring guest speakers on topics ranging from raptors and marine mammals to gardening for wildlife.

For the spring and summer months, we planned an extensive programme of face-to-face events, many of which were exclusive to Ulster Wildlife members. These included guided wildlife walks, woodland foraging and coastal safaris. In September, over 100 members joined us for our AGM and Members' Day at the beautiful Montalto Estate, learning more about bees from our Conservation staff.

Volunteering

We have continued to expand our volunteer efforts by involving more people in crucial projects, such as developing a community garden at Bog Meadows Nature Reserve, conducting bird surveys with our peatlands team, and assisting with the restoration of our newly acquired Haughey's Bog.

Additionally, we have mentored six university placement students across various teams, providing them with hands-on conservation experience to enhance their academic learning. We continue to welcome new students and have introduced short-term project placements for individuals seeking field experience without a year-long commitment.

Our corporate volunteer groups continued to grow, with 18 companies providing 290 staff with the opportunity to volunteer on our nature reserves with a variety of conservation tasks. From path maintenance at Bog Meadows, meadow management at Balloo Wetland, fencing repairs at Slievenacloy, and controlling invasive species at Ballynahone Bog, support from corporate volunteers continues to be invaluable.



Benjamin helping with a Wild Youth pond clipping session



Benjamin and volunteers helping to create the new community wildlife garden at Bog Meadows.

New to Nature gives Benjamin a step on the career ladder

Benjamin Jamieson has been working with our Community Engagement Team as part of the New to Nature programme, funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. This exciting initiative offers young people paid one-year work placements in nature-focused roles, providing valuable experience and fostering diversity in the sector.

“Two years ago, the thought of leading a school group or giving a talk on birdwatching would have given me sleepless nights and shaky hands. Now, thanks to incredible support and training from Ulster Wildlife, these activities excite me!

A year ago, I started as the new Urban Greenspaces Assistant. Before this, I was working in retail but knew it wasn't my true calling. A friend told me about the New to Nature scheme, and it's been an incredible year.

The role enabled me to engage in all aspects of community involvement and also work occasionally on our nature reserves. This gave me the chance to learn from different project officers and gain a comprehensive understanding of community engagement and the diverse ways to connect with various groups. I've worked across Belfast, collaborated with organisations like RNIB, and engaged with individuals ranging from 5-year-old P1 pupils to people in their 80s.

It's hard to express how much this year has meant to me and its impact on my personal growth. From first aid training and gaining a teaching qualification to getting first-hand experience leading a youth group, this past year has undoubtedly given me the skills and confidence for the next step: moving to England to work as a Youth Engagement Officer with Shropshire Wildlife Trust.



Benjamin Jamieson
New to Nature – Urban Greenspaces Assistant



Outcome 3 Climate

Nature-based solutions are playing a critical role in addressing the impacts of climate change in Northern Ireland

We are in the midst of nature and climate crises and neither can be resolved in isolation. The natural world can provide its own solutions to combat and reverse these threats. We are promoting the implementation of nature-based solutions such as the restoration of peatlands and of coastal blue carbon habitats to provide carbon sequestration and storage while supporting resilient wildlife.

40 hectares of peatland restored

1,083 hectares of peatland surveyed

38 million litres of water filtered by native oysters across our nurseries

120 species identified on and surrounding the native oyster nurseries



Peatland restoration in action

Restoring peatlands for nature and climate

During the year, we expanded our peatland restoration efforts and staff team to meet the challenges and objectives set out in the draft NI Peatland Strategy, thanks to funding from DAERA and the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation.

A significant part of this year has involved training and upskilling our new staff members and establishing a new office in Co Tyrone with our project partners, An Creagán. Despite this, we still managed extensive on-the-ground mapping, surveying 1,083 hectares of peatland habitats with peat depth and condition categories mapped across Antrim, Tyrone and Down.

We also acquired a new drone capable of collecting LiDAR and high-resolution aerial imagery, and our team underwent training in its operation. The data collected has formed the basis for developing new peatland restoration plans for three areas.

In addition to these efforts, we restored 40 hectares of lowland raised bog in Co Tyrone and removed invasive vegetation from six hectares of fen in Co Down. We also initiated hydrological monitoring at several new sites to establish baselines before restoration begins.

A key element of this new long-term project is the creation of a Peatland Collaborative Network to help peatland restoration practitioners across Northern Ireland gain skills, share experiences and showcase successes. The first meeting of the Peatland Collaborative Network was held in February 2024 at Peatlands Park, with representatives from 20 different organisations attending and eager to participate. Moving forward, the Peatland Collaborative Network Officer will facilitate training, talks and workshops, and build a comprehensive database of all peatland restoration activities across Northern Ireland.

Finally, we have been collaborating with partners across Ireland to develop a proposal for PEACE Plus funding. This proposal aims to deliver more restoration at key sites and to develop even more restoration plans for the future.

Restoring blue carbon habitats and species

We expanded our native oyster restoration work with the installation of a third nursery at Belfast Harbour's Dobbin Pier.

Belfast Lough was once home to abundant native oyster beds, but intense overfishing, pollution and disease have caused populations to decline by 95% since the mid-1800s. To boost biodiversity, improve water quality, and support the recovery of this priority species, 600 mature native oysters have been placed in purpose-built cages in the waters of this commercial shipping channel, a first for Northern Ireland.

To assess how the oysters have settled into this unique environment, where the waters of the River Lagan and Belfast Lough mix, we have been monitoring oyster growth and associated biodiversity. Over the winter, glass eels (an early life stage of the endangered European eel) were discovered at the nursery on their impressive journey upriver. Beginning as eggs in the Sargasso Sea, the larvae travel around 4,000 miles via the Gulf Stream to reach the shores of Europe.

Throughout the year, more than 100 marine species have been found in and around the oyster cages across all three native oyster nurseries at Belfast Lough, Glenarm and Bangor Marina. These include colourful nudibranchs (a type of sea slug), juvenile fish, crabs and sponges.

At Bangor Marina, there are promising signs that native oysters have begun to settle on the immediate seabed, with the discovery of oyster spat. Oyster larvae tend to settle on other oyster shells, known as spat, forming complex reefs that provide both refuge and habitat for many organisms, including juvenile fish and crabs. This is a promising sign that the oysters are successfully reproducing and releasing larvae into the surrounding waters, aiding the recovery of the native oyster population. Soon, mini oyster reefs could be forming in our nurseries!

Belfast Oyster Nursery



Monitoring the oysters



Student gets hands-on experience in peatland restoration

Brendan Byrne is a student at Queen's University Belfast and has been on placement with our Peatlands Team since January 2024. Brendan has already gained valuable hands-on experience to benefit his future career in nature conservation, learning from our team of experienced peatland practitioners.



Growing up in and around the Sperrins fostered my love of the outdoors and ignited my passion for protecting nature. With a desire to make a positive impact on the environment, a placement with Ulster Wildlife was the perfect fit.

Since joining the Peatlands Team, I have undertaken a project mapping native and invasive scrub species on Ballynahone Bog Nature Reserve to aid restoration plans. Learning to use the specialist ArcGIS software has enabled me to carry out this work and has equipped me with a valuable skill for my future career. I'll never forget the first time I watched the drone take off into the sky and soar kilometres overhead – it was an incredible experience!

Restoring peatlands is crucial for optimising their role in sequestering and storing carbon, and mitigating climate change. Many peatland sites are Areas of Special Scientific Interest and Special Areas of Conservation, home to rare and endangered species, so minimising bare peat is essential not only for wildlife but also to prevent acidification of our water sources.

From measuring peat depths in the beautiful uplands of Mullaghcarra to training as a first aid responder, I have gained experience in many areas within a short timeframe. I cannot thank Ulster Wildlife enough for this diverse and fulfilling placement, which has reinforced my desire to pursue a career in nature conservation.



Brendan assisting with species mapping on Ballynahone Bog Nature Reserve



Brendan Byrne
Peatland Restoration
Placement Student

Brendan conducting research on a raised bog with a fellow MSc student.



Holy blue butterfly on bluebell © Ronald Surgenor

Thank you for Bringing Nature Back

As we reflect on the past year, we are incredibly grateful to our members, donors and other supporters for their unwavering passion and support. You are the driving force behind our shared mission of bringing nature back. With every donation, volunteer hour and membership subscription you are breathing life back into our wild places and the creatures that call them home – thank you!

Donations from business, gifts in wills and donations in lieu of flowers are entered into a special Nature and Climate Fund for the Future – the funds from which goes towards habitat restoration, species protection, education and land purchases.

Once again, this year, support from key funders has been instrumental in developing long-term projects to help with nature's recovery on land and at sea. As we journey forward, we are thrilled to know that our collective efforts are shaping a wilder future for both nature and people.

Garden Tour at Sir Bob Salisbury's



Holly Blue on Bluebell © Ronald Surgenor



Hughes Insurance sponsored the Let Nature In campaign



Members

Nature continues to be under threat, but our members have remained steadfast in their support of local conservation efforts. This year, income from member donations slightly exceeded our annual target, thanks to the generosity of existing members increasing their regular giving in response to our annual appeal for more financial support for our work and lower cancellation rates. Our half-price January sale successfully attracted new supporters, who will pay the full membership rate after the first year.

Member events and online winter talks continue to be popular, with steady attendance each year. In the coming year, we plan to create even more opportunities for members to get closer to nature and learn more about nature conservation through our events.

Legacy and In-Memory

Northern Ireland is blessed with many wonderful landscapes, but our precious wildlife and wild places are in trouble. Leaving a gift in your will or in memory of a loved one ensures we can continue to deliver positive outcomes for nature for years to come. Anyone who loves wildlife can make a unique impact by remembering Ulster Wildlife in their will, ensuring that the species and habitats we treasure are preserved for future generations to enjoy.

Family and friends of Maud Wilson, a long-standing and deeply committed member, honoured her memory by donating to Ulster Wildlife in lieu of flowers, raising much-needed funds for local nature conservation work. Additionally, a significant bequest was made by life member Valerie Cooper. Gifts in wills help purchase land, protect key species, and nurture future wildlife champions.

Businesses

Working with businesses can be mutually beneficial for both nature and the companies involved, fostering a partnership that supports nature's recovery while also enhancing corporate social responsibility and sustainability efforts.

Thanks to Hughes Insurance for sponsoring the 'Let Nature In' wildlife gardening campaign; Wilson Resources for supporting our blue carbon work and funding a one-year graduate marine conservation post; Power NI for providing financial support for peatland restoration work, volunteering on our natures reserves and raising awareness of peatlands; Giraffe Associates for funding specialist barn owl nest box cameras; Field Day Ireland and Ardbarron Trust for their generous annual donations. Several businesses also raised funds for Ulster Wildlife through the Benevity portal, which powers purpose-driven business initiatives.

Thank you to our supporters



Irish Hare © Simon Gray

Grey heron at Balloo Woodland © Ronald Surgenor



Funders

Statutory (government) funding and charitable trust funding help support some of our larger projects and areas of work and are essential funding streams for many charities. Thank you to our funding partners for providing financial support for several specific projects over the past year.

Thanks to Ards and North Down Borough Council, Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, Garfield Weston Foundation, Ministry of Defence, National Lottery Community Fund, National Lottery Heritage Fund and Department of Communities, RSWT and Swire Charitable Trust.

New Leaf Compost donation for Bog Meadows



Fundraising & Donations

While membership is our primary form of fundraising – enabling the charity to plan for future work through regular giving – we are incredibly grateful for all of the other donations we received during the year.

Donations include a heavy-duty refurbished laptop for the Nature Reserve Team from NI Trucks; peat-free compost for the new community wildlife garden at Bog Meadows Nature Reserve from Natural World Products; birthday gifts from supporters on Meta, and individuals like Irene Surgenor who availed of our donation envelopes in lieu of gifts for her birthday celebrations; donations for talks we delivered; and generous gifts from many supporters towards our work in general.



Plans for the Future

With the bold and ambitious goals outlined in our Strategy 2030, we have a significant task ahead to restore and reverse the decline of nature. This year, we have made substantial progress across all strategy areas, laying a strong foundation to achieve our vision of a thriving natural world. We aim to inspire everyone to participate in nature's recovery, ensuring nature plays a crucial role in addressing both the nature and climate emergencies.

Long-eared owl © Ronald Surgenor

Outcome 1: Nature is in recovery and wildlife is thriving across Northern Ireland

We will continue to advocate for, guide, and inform the development of a national 'Nature Recovery Network' for Northern Ireland – a strategic approach to creating more, bigger, better and joined-up spaces for wildlife to thrive.

At a more localised level, we will seek further opportunities to establish nature recovery zones around our nature reserves, creating extensive wildlife-friendly areas that connect with each other. In partnership with stakeholders, we will also implement specific actions to support the recovery of key species.

We will build upon our efforts to engage farmers and landowners in nature's recovery, and we will engage with the fishing industry to ensure our seas are well-managed for nature.

Outcome 2: More people are taking positive action for nature and climate and are benefitting from time spent in nature.

We will continue to support and empower people to become agents of change to help address the climate and nature emergencies while developing new and innovative ways to engage with more diverse audiences.

Young people and under-represented groups will remain at the forefront of our efforts, and we will create new opportunities to connect and empower them to campaign, take action as individuals and within their communities and drive political and behavioural change. This approach will be embedded in our forthcoming People Engagement Strategy.

Growing and strengthening our membership and supporter network is key to delivering on the ambition of our strategy and we will continue to focus our efforts on engaging and inspiring new members and supporters from every part of society.

Outcome 3: Nature-based solutions are playing a central role in addressing climate change

We will restore natural ecosystems at scale, expanding our peatland restoration work, develop new native oyster nurseries, and establish new partnership projects to deliver blue carbon habitat restoration such as seagrass. Together, these initiatives will provide long-term carbon sequestration and storage while also promoting diverse and resilient wildlife.

Financial Review at 31 March 2024

Ulster Wildlife’s financial position remained stable during the year and a modest surplus on unrestricted activities was achieved.

Sources of Income

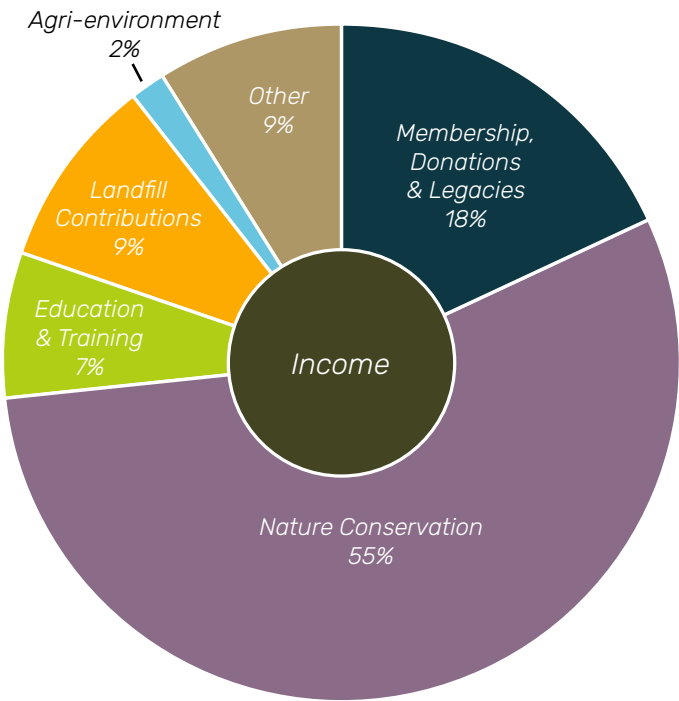
Unrestricted income is revenue generated by the charity for its general purposes. It can be used at the discretion of the charity on any of the charity’s objects and a substantial component is donations from our members and supporters.

Unrestricted income is 15% higher than the previous year (+£101k). The main contributing factor was an increase in donations and legacies (+£89k).

Restricted income is income given to the charity for specific purposes. It may be a grant for a specific piece of conservation work or education activity or funds to be awarded as grants to third parties, in line with specific grant

guidelines. Restricted income remained at a similar level to the previous year with a small decrease of 3% (–£84k).

Ulster Wildlife’s restricted income has two main components, grants for specific conservation and education activity which is delivered by the charity; and Landfill Communities Funds where grants are awarded by the charity to third parties for purposes defined under the Landfill Communities Fund guidelines. Detail of the funders which contribute to our restricted projects and other sources of restricted income is outlined in Notes 4 – 8 of the Financial Statements.



Income	Unrestricted Funds £'000	Restricted Funds £'000	Total Funds £'000	Ratio
Membership, Donations & Legacies	541	54	595	18%
Nature Conservation	-	1,794	1,794	55%
Agri-environment payments	47	6	53	2%
Landfill Tax Contributions	-	299	299	9%
Environmental Education & Training	-	230	230	7%
Other Income	175	110	285	9%
Total Income	763	2,493	3,256	100%

Financial Review at 31 March 2024

How the Charity Spent its Resources

Overall expenditure was 6% lower in the year to 31 March 2024 than in the previous year (–£174k).

In line with the income split, a large part of the expenditure is on conservation and education activity.

Restricted projects make a contribution to core overhead costs for time and expenses incurred in running the projects.

After taking this contribution into account an unrestricted surplus of £57k was generated.

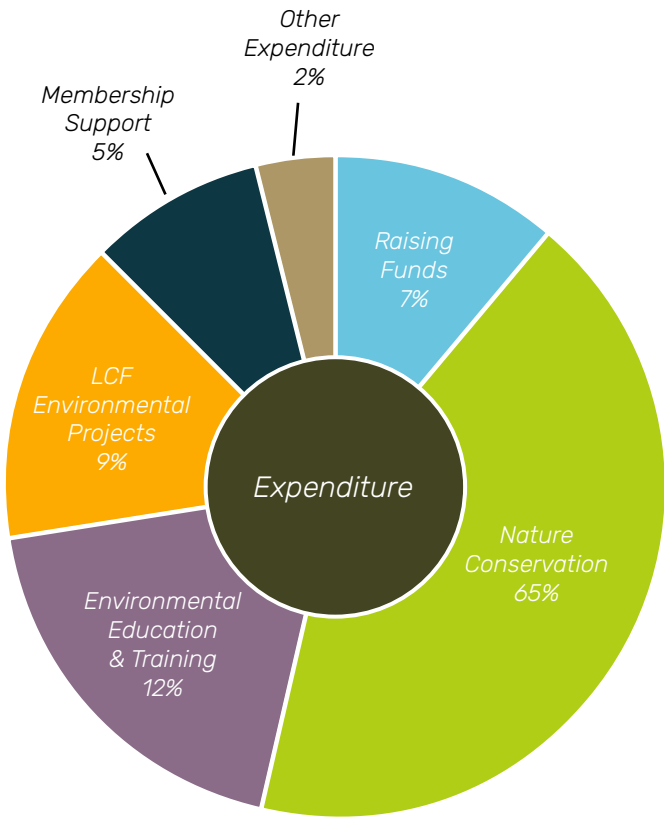
The surplus is in keeping with the charity’s objectives which are to deliver conservation outcomes rather than a surplus of income over expenditure. A modest surplus is, however, necessary in order to maintain financial stability and help to secure the long-term viability of the charity.

After expenditure on restricted projects, the ‘surplus’ on restricted funds amounted to £653k.

This ‘surplus’ represents income received relating to projects in the year to 31 March 2024 where expenditure was incurred in prior years and was in line with expectations. It also includes £250k received in the year to assist with cash flow in large scale funded projects for conservation works. When these project works are complete Ulster Wildlife can use these funds to invest in land for peatland restoration.

£73k of the surplus relates to income received for the purchase of capital equipment including where the expenditure has been capitalised on the balance sheet.

Restricted financial reserves cannot be utilised by the charity, except for the very specific purposes set out by the funder. These financial reserves are therefore not available to fund either general working capital requirements or any unexpected events.



Expenditure	Total Funds £'000	Ratio
Raising Funds	172	7%
Nature Conservation	1,657	65%
Environmental Education & Training	291	12%
LCF Environmental Projects	231	9%
Membership Support	130	5%
Other Expenditure	59	2%
Total Expenditure	2,540	100%

Organisational support costs of £364k (Notes 10 & 11) have been allocated across the activities above on a proportional basis representing the resources expended to run all aspects of the charity.

Structure, Governance & Management

Ulster Wildlife Trust, (operating as Ulster Wildlife) is registered with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland (NIC101848) and is a not-for-profit company incorporated in Northern Ireland, limited by guarantee (NI 12711). It is an independent body, locally governed, affiliated to The Wildlife Trusts, a federated network of 46 charities across the UK.

The charity is governed by a Board of Trustees (Council) comprised of up to 17 members who serve up to a nine-year term. The Ulster Wildlife Council is responsible for making strategic decisions in relation to policy and procedure within Ulster Wildlife, while day-to-day operational decisions and management is delegated to the Chief Executive, who in turn oversees the staff team of Ulster Wildlife of which there were 45 at the end of March 2024.

All Board Members receive induction training in relation to their role, are provided with a Governance Handbook when they are appointed and adhere to the Code of Good Governance.

Ulster Wildlife also has an Honorary President, Joe Furphy, who does not have a voting or decision-making role on the Board but contributes to discussions and carries out representation for the Charity.

Details of serving Trustees during 2023/24 can be found below.

CHAIR



Ken Brundle
(Appointed on 17 September 2013, appointed Chairman 22 November 2017. Stood down on 30 September 2023)

CHAIR



John Witchell
(Appointed on 07 December 2017, appointed Chair 30 September 2023.)
F & A

VICE-CHAIR



Stephen Aston
(Appointed on 07 December 2017, appointed Vice Chairman on 27 September 2018)
F & A

VICE-CHAIR



David Sterling
(Appointed 16 October 2020, appointed Vice Chair 02 December 2021)
E, F & A

HONORARY TREASURER



David Hendron
(Appointed on 25 July 2018, appointed Treasurer on 27 September 2018)
F & A

COMPANY SECRETARY



Catherine Thompson
(Appointed on 14 March 2019, appointed Company Secretary on 18 March 2021)
G

COUNCIL MEMBER



Anna Barclay
(Appointed 24 November 2020)
G

COUNCIL MEMBER



Joe Breen
(Appointed 9 June 2022. Passed away June 2024)
E

COUNCIL MEMBER



Bob Brown
(Appointed 16 October 2020)
E

COUNCIL MEMBER



Richard Buchanan
(Co-opted 31 Oct 2023)
F

COUNCIL MEMBER



Chloe Craig
(Co-opted 30 Nov 2023)
E

COUNCIL MEMBER



Fiona Davey
(Appointed on 19 November 2015)
G

COUNCIL MEMBER



Ciarán Ferrin
(Co-opted 30 Nov 2023)
G

COUNCIL MEMBER



Seamus McKee
(Appointed 18 March 2021)
F

COUNCIL MEMBER



Stephen Smith
(Appointed 24 November 2020 Resigned 19 March 2024.)
F

COUNCIL MEMBER



Helen Surgenor
(Appointed 24 November 2020 Resigned 30 Sept 23)
F

COUNCIL MEMBER



Ed Wright
(Appointed on 07 October 2015)
F

HONORARY PRESIDENT



Joe Furphy



Marsh fritillary © Simon Gray



Cormorant © Ronald Surgenor



Frogs © Ronald Surgenor

Changes to the Council during 2023/2024

Helen Surgenor resigned on 30 September 2023 alongside Stephen Smith on 19 March 2024. Ken Brundle stood down as Chair on 30 September 2023 having served on the Council since 2013 and as Chair since 2017. Ken brought a wealth of experience and expertise, and his contribution has been invaluable. John Witchell was appointed as new Chair. Richard Buchanan was coopted on 31 October 2023.

As part of our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion two youth Council members, Chloe Craig and Ciarán Ferrin, were coopted on 30 November 2023.

The governance sub-structure comprises of four sub-committees: Governance, Finance & Audit, Environment and Fundraising. This governance framework is designed to ensure that we are an accountable, effective and efficient charity and to manage risk at the required level.

1. The Governance Committee (G) ensures that the Ulster Wildlife Council fulfils its legal, ethical and functional responsibilities through adequate governance policy development, skills audits, recruitment strategies for Council Members, training programmes, monitoring of Council activities and evaluation of Council's performance, human resources and health & safety management.

2. The Finance & Audit Committee (F&A) supports Council in ensuring that the effective governance of Ulster Wildlife is maintained in relation to: Financial and Physical Resources.

3. The Environment Committee (E) provides ongoing strategic input into the organisation's work linked to nature recovery and community action. The remit of this Committee encompasses nature reserves, environmental projects linked to habitats and/or species, and input into regional policy issues.

4. The Fundraising Committee (F) provides ongoing strategic input to the organisation's fundraising activities - with a focus on unrestricted fundraising.

Statement of Trustees' Responsibilities

The Trustees (who are also the Directors of Ulster Wildlife Trust) are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Annual Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and regulations.

Company and charity law requires the Directors to prepare financial statements for each financial year, which give a true and fair view of the state of the affairs of the charitable company and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the Directors are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently,
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities Statement of Recommended Practice,
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent,
- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements,
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charitable company will continue in operation.

The Trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the charity's transactions and disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and to enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Charities

Act 2008. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Provision of Information to Auditors

Each of the individuals who is a Trustee at the date of approval of this report confirms that:

- so far as they are aware, there is no relevant audit information of which the charity's auditor is unaware; and
- they have taken all the steps that they ought to have taken to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the charity's auditors are aware of that information.

Auditor

DNTCA Limited are deemed to be re-appointed under section 487(2) of the Companies Act 2006. This report was approved by the Board on 29 August 2024 and signed on its behalf by

John Witchell
Chairman

David Hendron
Honorary Treasurer



Articles of Association

Ulster Wildlife's charitable objectives as set out in our Articles of Association are:

(1) The advancement of environmental protection and improvement, in particular the conservation of all aspects of Northern Ireland and its adjacent areas' wildlife, biodiversity, geodiversity and associated natural beauty for the benefit of present and future generations by:

(a) safeguarding, maintaining and enhancing natural biodiversity and geodiversity through the management of nature reserves (however entitled or however established);

(b) practising, advocating, encouraging, influencing, advising and campaigning for best conservation practice involving land, sea and freshwater management practice in ways that favour biodiversity, geodiversity, ecosystem health, sustainable use of natural resources and sustainable development;

(c) undertaking action, independently or in partnership, to protect threatened habitats, sites of geodiversity or heritage significance, at local, national or international levels on or in water, land and adjacent seas;

(d) taking account of other aspects of the natural heritage on which wildlife is dependent or to which it contributes, including landforms and landscapes;

(e) improving the quality of life of people through supporting a biodiversity, ecosystem, geodiversity and sustainability led approach to the management and design of the natural and built environment.

(2) The advancement of education by raising the public's awareness and knowledge of all aspects of the natural and built heritage, biodiversity and geodiversity of Northern Ireland and its adjacent areas by promoting, undertaking and co-operating in research and gathering and sharing information on these topics.

(3) The advancement of citizenship through volunteering linked to natural heritage including the promotion of sustainable food production and sustainable lifestyles.

(4) The advancement of the arts, culture, heritage and science linked to natural heritage through events and project-based action.

(5) The advancement of health and well-being through activities linked to the natural environment.

Devils bit scabious © Ronald Surgenor



Blue tit © Simon Gray

Key Policies & Processes

Managing Risk

Ulster Wildlife Trustees are responsible for overseeing risk management by the charity. They are responsible for ensuring that Ulster Wildlife has an effective system of internal control, management and audit to enable the charity to take advantage of opportunities whilst ensuring that the charity remains protected. Risk management is well established and is considered in every aspect of our work. We have an active risk management process in place to make sure that appropriate risk assessments are completed and controls are in place to manage and mitigate risk across the organisation.

The Board of Trustees and Senior Leadership Team work together to ensure that risk is very carefully assessed in relation to the health, welfare and safety of staff, volunteers and the public. As such, health & safety risk management is supported by an external consultant. Risks are also reviewed in the broadest sense and anything that might alter or impact on the charity's ability to fulfil its charitable objectives is considered.

Processes include:

- Risk assessments are completed by all staff to identify, evaluate and manage risks.
- Health & Safety management system including phone app is used to facilitate management and record key information.
- Risk register with mitigation actions is reviewed at least quarterly by the Board.
- Health & Safety is a key factor in selecting external contractors and Health & Safety obligations are included in awarded external contracts.
- Comprehensive risk management reviews are carried out once a year by all subcommittees and are reported to the Board Meeting.
- Multi-year planning, with targets that are linked to delivery of organisational strategy.
- 'Value for Money' principles guide when and where we source goods and services.
- Annual external audit.

The most significant risks identified in 2023/24 were:

- The cost of living crisis and its continued impact on fundraising.
- Impact of inflationary pressures on running costs.
- Staff retention and recruitment.
- Delays in agreement of funding due to lack of NI Executive in place.

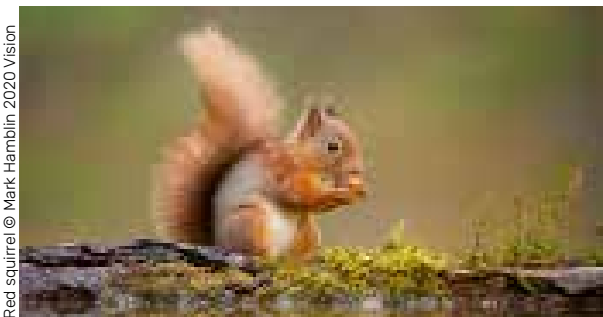
Cost of living crisis and inflationary increases were actively managed during the year. A membership growth plan and associated staffing structure has been put into place in an effort to return to membership growth over the coming years.

Staff turnover and recruitment was higher than usual during the year due to funding uncertainties and some projects ending, and others starting during the year. Government funding was agreed in summer 2023, with five-year agreements now in place through the DAERA Environment Fund. Staff retention will remain a key issue for the charity to manage moving forward.

The most significant risks identified for 2024/25 are:

- Staff retention and recruitment.
- Staffing gaps to be managed including recruitment of a new Chief Executive.
- Managing the influx of government policies and consultations due to the return of the NI Executive.

Red squirrel © Mark Hamblin 2020 Vision



Equal Opportunities and Diversity

Ulster Wildlife aims to be an employer of choice, for people from different backgrounds, and through our Equality in the Workplace policy we promote respect for the individual and equality of opportunity.

Our aim is for our workforce to be truly representative of all sections of the wider community and for each employee to feel respected and able to give their best. Within Ulster Wildlife there is respect for promotion and protection of each individual's human rights. Ulster Wildlife promotes being at ease with all aspects of diversity, built on fairness and respect for all. Decisions about recruitment and selection, promotion, training or any other benefit are made objectively and without discrimination.

Our Equality in the Workplace policy helps all those who work for us to develop their full potential and ensure that the talents and resources of the workforce are utilised to fully maximise the efficiency of the organisation.

Sustainability

We have set a target to achieve net zero emissions by 2030 and we take sustainability very seriously. We have already commenced the net zero journey, which will be an integral part of our organisational and project planning. All electricity used is renewable and we have started phasing in EVs as budget allows. During the project development phase for new projects, carbon footprint and location of project staff is considered, as by the nature of our work, our activities are dispersed throughout Northern Ireland.

A priority for Northern Ireland in terms of the regional carbon budget is to restore damaged peatland and this is a significant delivery strand for the charity. We are also increasing our work in the area of 'blue carbon' habitat restoration.

Wider network

Ulster Wildlife is part of a collective of 46 Wildlife Trusts, represented nationally by The Royal Society for Wildlife Trusts (RSWT). The Wildlife Trusts collectively act together, where appropriate, in key policy areas and campaigns.

Financial Management

Financial Reserves Policy

The Trustees recognise there is a balance to be achieved between delivering our charitable objectives and managing the actual and potential risks of failing to meet our liabilities when they fall due. Consequently, the Trustees plan to hold a level of unrestricted financial reserves to provide the necessary resilience to manage these risks.

These risks include, amongst others:

- Loss of funding sources
- Funding delays
- Costs associated with unforeseen closure

The Trustees, having assessed the likelihood of these risks occurring, consider that an unrestricted financial reserve level (excluding designated funds) equal to six months unrestricted payroll and support costs and potential winding up costs should be targeted. This amounts to around £1m for the year to 31 March 2024 as permanent staff numbers have increased. The balance on unrestricted reserves as of 31 March 2024, net of unrestricted fixed assets is £741k which would cover potential winding up costs and 4 months of payroll for permanent positions and support costs.

Designated Funds

In addition to the above, the Trustees have designated certain unrestricted funds as the 'Fund for the Future'. This money is earmarked to help further the charity's strategic objectives, delivering long term strategic change and this includes the acquisition of new nature reserves.

Monitoring and Reviewing

Financial reserve levels are monitored on a quarterly basis throughout the year as a standing item on the Finance Committee's agenda. They also form a part of the financial information presented to the Board on a quarterly basis.

Our Promise to Our Supporters

At Ulster Wildlife our members, supporters and funders are at the heart of everything we do to help wildlife and wild places thrive. That is why, as a registered charity (NIC101848), we are part of the Fundraising Regulator's self-regulatory scheme.

As members of the scheme, we follow the Institute of Fundraising's Codes of Fundraising Practice and comply with the key principles embodied in the Codes. This means when supporters make a donation to us they can be assured that our fundraising is legal, open, honest and respectful.

Our Fundraising Promise



We are committed to high standards.

- We do all we can to ensure that staff, fundraisers, volunteers and fundraising contractors working with us to raise funds comply with the Code and with this Promise.
- We comply with the law including those that apply to data protection, health and safety and the environment.

We are honest and open.

- We tell the truth and do not exaggerate; we do what we say we are going to do.
- We answer all reasonable questions about our fundraising activities and costs.
- We are clear about who we are, what we do and how donations are used.
- Where we have a promotional agreement with a commercial company, we make clear how much of the purchase price we receive.
- We give a clear explanation of how a donation can be made and how to amend a regular commitment.

We are respectful.

- We respect the rights, dignities and privacy of our supporters and beneficiaries.
- We will not put undue pressure on anyone to make a gift, and if a person does not want to give or wishes to cease giving, we will respect that decision.
- If someone tells us that they don't want us to contact them in a particular way, we will not do so – our Privacy Notice for Members and Supporters is available on our website at ulsterwildlife.org/privacy-notice

We are accountable.

- If anyone is unhappy with anything we have done whilst fundraising, they can contact us to make a complaint at complaints@ulsterwildlife.org. For further information, read our complaints policy.
- If we cannot resolve a complaint, we accept the authority of the Fundraising Regulator to make a final adjudication.



Redshank © Simon Gray

Advisors, Senior Personnel and Administrative Details

Auditors	DNT Chartered Accountants Ormeau House 91-97 Ormeau Road Belfast BT7 1SH
Bankers	Danske Bank Belfast Finance Centre PO Box 183 Donegall Square West Belfast BT1 6JS
Solicitors	Edwards & Co., 28 Hill Street, Belfast BT1 2LA
Company Secretary	Catherine Thompson
Senior Leadership Team	Jennifer Fulton - Chief Executive Officer Dawn Miskelly - Director of Development and Governance Peter McEvoy - Director of Land Management
Charity Registration Number	NIC 101848
Company Registration Number	NI12711
Registered Office and Operational Address	McClelland House 10 Heron Road Belfast BT3 9LE

Independent Auditors' Report to the Members of the Ulster Wildlife Trust

Opinion

We have audited the charity financial statements of Ulster Wildlife Trust ('the charity') for the financial year ended 31 March 2024 which comprise the Statement of Financial Activities (incorporating an Income and Expenditure Account), the Balance Sheet, the Statement of Cash Flows and notes to the financial statements, including the summary of significant accounting policies set out in note 2. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including FRS 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland" and Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with FRS 102.

In our opinion when reporting in accordance with a fair presentation framework the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the charity's affairs as at 31 March 2024 and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice;
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the charity in accordance with ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled

our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the charity's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from the date when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the trustees with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

Other information

The other information comprises the information included in the annual report other than the financial statements and our Auditor's Report thereon. The trustees are responsible for the other information contained within the annual report. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

Our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the course of the audit, or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether this gives rise to a material

misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact. We have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinion on other matter prescribed by the Companies Act 2006

In our opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit:

- the information given in the Trustees Annual Report for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements; and
- the Trustees Annual Report has been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

In the light of the knowledge and understanding of the charity and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified material misstatements in the Trustees Annual Report.

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the Companies Act 2006 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept; or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- certain disclosures of trustees' remuneration specified by law are not made.

Independent Auditors' Report to the Members of the Ulster Wildlife Trust

Responsibilities of trustees for the financial statements

As explained more fully in the Statement of Trustees' Responsibilities, the trustees are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as they determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the trustees are responsible for assessing the charity's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless management either intends to liquidate the charity or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an Auditor's Report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We design procedures in line with our responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of irregularities, including fraud. The extent to which our procedures are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud is detailed below:

Our approach to identifying and assessing the risks of material misstatement in respect of irregularities, including fraud and non compliance with laws and regulations, was as follows:

- The engagement partner ensured that the engagement team collectively had the appropriate competence, capabilities and skills to identify or recognise non-compliance with applicable laws and regulations;
- We identified the laws and regulations applicable to the company through discussions with directors and other management,
- We focused on specific laws and regulations which we considered may have a direct material effect on the financial statements or the operations of the company,

To address the risk of fraud through management bias and override of controls, we:

- Performed analytical procedures to identify any unusual or unexpected relationships;
- Investigated the rationale behind significant or unusual transactions;
- Tested journal entries to identify unusual transactions;
- Assessed whether judgements and assumptions made in determining the accounting estimates were indicative of potential bias.

In response to the risk of irregularities and non-compliance with laws and regulations, we designed procedures which included, but were not limited to:

- Agreeing financial statement disclosures to underlying supporting documentation;

Irish Moiled Cattle © Ronald Surgenor

Independent Auditors' Report to the Members of the Ulster Wildlife Trust

- Reading the minutes of meetings of those charged with governance;
- Enquiring of management as to actual and potential litigation and claims;
- Reviewing correspondence with HMRC, Companies House and the company's legal advisors.

There are inherent limitations in our audit procedures described above. The more removed that laws and regulations are from financial transactions, the less likely it is that we would become aware of non-compliance. Auditing standards also limit the audit procedures required to identify non-compliance with laws and regulations to enquiry of the directors and other management and the inspection of regulatory and legal correspondence, if any.

Material misstatements that arise due to fraud can be harder to detect than those that arise from error as they may involve deliberate concealment or collusion.

A further description of our responsibilities is available on the Financial Reporting Council's website at: www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of our auditor's report.

Further information regarding the scope of our responsibilities as auditor

As part of an audit in accordance with ISAs (UK), we exercise professional judgement and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting

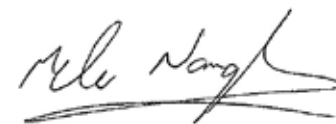
from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.

- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the charity's internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by trustees.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of the trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the charity's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our Auditor's Report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our Auditor's Report. However, future events or conditions may cause the charity to cease to continue as a going concern.
- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

The purpose of our audit work and to whom we owe our responsibilities

This report is made solely to the charity's members, as a body, in accordance with Chapter 3 of Part 16 of the Companies Act 2006. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charity's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charity and the charity's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.



Mr M Nangle (Senior Statutory Auditor) for and on behalf of **DNTCA Limited, Ormeau House, 91-97 Ormeau Road, Belfast, BT7 1SH.**

Statement of Financial Activities (including income and expenditure account) for the year ended 31 March 2024

	Notes	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	2024 Total Funds £	2023 Total Funds £
INCOME FROM:					
Donations & Legacies	3	541,576	53,689	595,265	525,356
Conservation Activities	4	-	1,793,700	1,793,700	1,918,730
Agri-environment Payments		46,625	6,596	53,221	28,242
Charitable Activities - Landfill Contributions	5	-	299,134	299,134	227,085
Education & Training Activities	6	-	230,002	230,002	313,655
Interest Received	7	17,949	7,935	25,884	6,872
Other Income	8	156,763	101,718	258,481	218,698
TOTAL INCOME		762,913	2,492,774	3,255,687	3,238,638
EXPENDITURE ON					
Raising Funds	9	144,790	-	144,790	80,453
Charitable Activities	10	706,227	1,688,756	2,394,983	2,633,739
TOTAL EXPENDITURE		851,017	1,688,756	2,539,773	2,714,192
NET INCOME BEFORE TRANSFERS AND FOREIGN EXCHANGE					
		(88,104)	804,018	715,914	524,446
Gains/(losses) from Foreign Exchange		(6,368)	68	(6,300)	(871)
Transfers Between Funds	14	151,567	(151,567)	-	-
NET MOVEMENT IN FUNDS		57,095	652,519	709,614	523,575
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS:					
Total Funds at 1 April 2023		1,198,737	1,989,544	3,188,281	2,664,706
Transfer (from)/to Designated Fund for the Future		-	-	-	-
TOTAL FUNDS AT 31 MARCH 2024		1,255,832	2,642,063	3,897,895	3,188,281

The notes on pages 40 to 43 form part of these financial statements.
The Statement of financial activities includes all gains and losses in the year.
All income and expenditure derives from continuing activities.

Statement of Financial Position at 31 March 2024

	Notes	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	2024 Total Funds £	2023 Total Funds £
FIXED ASSETS					
Tangible Assets	16	305,652	1,552,563	1,858,215	1,826,741
CURRENT ASSETS					
Debtors	17	296,919	238,726	535,645	226,806
Cash at Bank and in Hand		869,305	1,311,472	2,180,777	2,076,888
		1,166,224	1,550,198	2,716,422	2,303,694
CURRENT LIABILITIES					
Creditors	18	208,608	117,882	326,490	591,231
NET CURRENT ASSETS		957,616	1,432,316	2,389,932	1,712,463
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES		1,263,268	2,984,879	4,248,147	3,539,204
CREDITORS due in more than 1 year					
Capital Grants	19	7,436	342,816	350,252	350,923
		1,255,832	2,642,063	3,897,895	3,188,281
FINANCIAL RESERVES					
General Fund	20	1,046,346	-	1,046,346	989,251
Fund for the Future	22	209,486	-	209,486	209,486
Restricted Funds	21	-	2,642,063	2,642,063	1,989,544
		1,255,832	2,642,063	3,897,895	3,188,281

These financial statements were approved and signed by the members of the Board and authorised for issue on 29th August 2024



John Witchell, Chair



David Hendron, Honorary Treasurer

The notes on pages 41 to 44 form part of these financial statements.
Company Registration Number: NI 12711

Statement of Cash Flows for year ending 31 March 2024

	2024	2023
	£	£
Cash Flows from operating activities		
Net Income/(Expenditure)	715,914	524,446
<i>Adjustments for</i>		
Depreciation of Tangible Fixed Assets	41,152	25,982
Increase/(Decrease) in Deferred Capital Grant	(671)	(1,006)
(Increase)/Decrease in Trade and Other Debtors	(308,839)	491,109
Increase/(Decrease) in Trade and Other Creditors	(264,741)	(483,320)
Net Cash (used in)/from Operating Activities	182,815	557,211
Cash Flows from Investing Activities		
Purchase of Tangible Assets	(72,626)	(187,508)
Disposal of Tangible Assets	-	4,796
Net Cash used in Investing Activities	(72,626)	(182,712)
Net Increase /(Decrease) in Cash and Cash Equivalents	110,189	374,499
Cash and Cash Equivalents at Beginning of the Year	2,076,888	1,703,260
Net Increase/(Decrease) in Cash and Cash Equivalents due to Exchange Rate Movements	(6,300)	(871)
Cash and Cash Equivalents at End of the Year	2,180,777	2,076,888

Notes to the accounts

1 Statement of Compliance

These financial statements have been prepared in compliance with FRS102, 'The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and the Republic of Ireland', 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 (Charities SORP (FRS102)) and the Charities Act 2008.

2 Accounting Policies

Basis of preparation

The financial statements have been prepared on the historical cost basis, as modified by the revaluation of certain financial assets and liabilities measured at fair value through income or expenditure.

The financial statements are prepared in sterling, which is the functional currency of the entity.

Going concern

There are no material uncertainties about the charity's ability to continue.

Fund accounting

Unrestricted funds are available for use, at the discretion of the trustees, to further any of the charity's purposes.

Restricted funds are subject to restrictions on their expenditure declared by the donor or funder or through the terms of an appeal.

Incoming resources

All incoming resources are included in the statement of financial activities when entitlement has passed to the charity; it is probable that the economic benefits associated with the transaction will flow to the charity and the amount can be reliably measured. The following specific policies are applied to particular categories of income:

- income from donations or grants is recognised when there is evidence of entitlement to the gift, receipt is probable and its amount can be measured reliably.
- legacy income is recognised when receipt is probable and entitlement is established.
- income from contracts for the supply of services is recognised with the delivery of the contracted service.

These are classified as unrestricted funds unless there is a contractual requirement for it to be spent on a particular purpose and returned if unspent, in which case it is regarded as restricted.

Resources expended

Expenditure is recognised on an accruals basis as a liability is incurred. Expenditure is classified under headings of the statement of financial activities to which it relates:

- expenditure on raising funds includes the costs of all fundraising activities.

- expenditure on charitable activities includes all costs incurred by the charity in undertaking activities that further its charitable aims for the benefit of its beneficiaries, including those support costs and costs relating to the governance of the charity.

All costs are allocated to expenditure categories reflecting the use of the resource. Direct costs attributable to a single activity are allocated directly to that activity. Shared costs are apportioned between the activities they contribute to on a reasonable, justifiable and consistent basis.

Depreciation

Purchased assets, which individually exceed £5000 at cost are included in the balance sheet at historic cost less depreciation and any impairment in accordance with FRS 102.

Fixed Assets are depreciated over the period of their useful lives as follows:

Land	not depreciated
Buildings	2.5% straight line
Equipment	10% straight line
Computers	25% straight line
Vehicles - cars and vans	15% straight line

Depreciation for specialist conservation equipment with limited resale value would normally be depreciated over the lifetime of the project in which they are used.

Grants

Government and other grants are recognised at the fair value of the asset received or receivable. Grants are not recognised until there is reasonable assurance that the charity will comply with the conditions attaching to them and the grants will be received.

Foreign currency

Transactions in foreign currencies are translated at rates prevailing at the date of the transaction.

Pensions

Ulster Wildlife operates a defined contribution pension scheme and matches employee contributions to the scheme at a maximum rate of 9% of salary.

Taxation

The organisation is a registered charity with HMRC and is therefore not liable for taxation to the extent that any surplus or gains arising are wholly applied to its charitable objects.

The company is registered for VAT. Much of the income is either exempt or outside the scope of VAT.

Consequently, it is not possible to recover most of the VAT incurred on expenditure. Income and expenditure are shown exclusive of recoverable VAT.

Notes to the accounts

3 Donations & Legacies

	Unrestricted Funds 2024 £	Restricted Funds 2024 £	Unrestricted Funds 2023 £	Restricted Funds 2023 £
Legacy & In Memory Giving	97,926	-	3,320	-
Membership Contributions inc. Gift Aid	428,802	-	416,757	-
Corporate Support	6,824	42,225	26,491	58,500
Other Gifts & Donations	8,024	11,464	6,141	14,147
	541,576	53,689	452,709	72,647

4 Conservation Grants

	Unrestricted Funds 2024 £	Restricted Funds 2024 £	Unrestricted Funds 2023 £	Restricted Funds 2023 £
DAERA Environment Fund	-	946,401	-	1,092,606
DAERA Maritime and Fisheries Fund	-	4,953	-	47,625
Department for Infrastructure Living Places and Spaces Fund	-	-	-	10,000
Environmental Farming Scheme	-	218,269	-	231,641
Esmée Fairbairn Foundation	-	128,919	-	103,250
EU- Interreg VA	-	211,516	-	247,531
Garfield Weston Foundation	-	-	-	30,000
Kreitman Foundation	-	-	-	11,600
Landfill Communities Fund	-	10,450	-	2,167
Marine Institute	-	2,507	-	1,623
Ministry of Defence	-	20,685	-	14,249
National Lottery Heritage Fund	-	-	-	116,438
Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts	-	200,000	-	10,000
Swire Charitable Trust	-	50,000	-	-
	-	1,793,700	-	1,918,730

5 Landfill Environmental Projects

	Unrestricted Funds 2024 £	Restricted Funds 2024 £	Unrestricted Funds 2023 £	Restricted Funds 2023 £
Landfill Contributions Received	-	299,134	-	227,085
	-	299,134	-	227,085
<u>Expenditure</u>				
Entrust Administration Fee	-	10,111	-	8,084
Direct Project Expenditure	-	194,251	-	276,178
Direct Costs	26,288	-	20,166	-
	26,288	204,362	20,166	284,262

Notes to the accounts

6 Education & Training Grants

	Unrestricted Funds 2024 £	Restricted Funds 2024 £	Unrestricted Funds 2023 £	Restricted Funds 2023 £
Department for Communities (Job Start Scheme)	-	-	-	60,471
Department for Communities (Covid Recovery Employment and Skills Initiative for Heritage)	-	35,399	-	44,249
Education Authority	-	(2,688)	-	7,445
European Solidarity Corps	-	-	-	13,201
National Lottery Community Fund (Our Environment, Our Future)	-	-	-	22,768
National Lottery Community Fund (People & Communities)	-	60,520	-	74,761
National Lottery Community Fund (Empowering Young People 3)	-	60,863	-	61,282
National Lottery Heritage Fund (NextDoor Nature)	-	45,172	-	29,478
National Lottery Heritage Fund (New to Nature)	-	29,737	-	-
Belfast City Council	-	999	-	-
	-	230,002	-	313,655

7 Interest Received

Interest received in Restricted Funds is the interest earned on landfill tax receipts held prior to disbursement, and interest received which is used to fund expenditure on nature reserves. Interest received in unrestricted funds is bank interest earned on other cash balances.

8 Other Income

	Unrestricted Funds 2024 £	Restricted Funds 2024 £	Unrestricted Funds 2023 £	Restricted Funds 2023 £
Esmée Fairbairn Foundation Core Funding	75,000	-	110,000	-
Consultancy	28,786	-	20,198	-
Sundry income	52,977	101,718	46,620	41,880
	156,763	101,718	176,818	41,880

9 Expenditure on Raising Donations & Legacies

	Unrestricted Funds 2024 £	Restricted Funds 2024 £	Unrestricted Funds 2023 £	Restricted Funds 2023 £
Travel	5	-	62	-
Professional Fees	-	-	92	-
Printed Materials, Misc	17,516	-	14,338	-
Wages & Salary Costs*	127,269	-	65,961	-
	144,790	-	80,453	-

* Increase in salary costs related to planned restructure in the membership team to grow income in future years.

Notes to the accounts

10 Charitable Activities

	Unrestricted Funds 2024 £	Restricted Funds 2024 £	Total Funds 2024 £	Total Funds 2023 £
Landfill Environmental Projects	26,288	204,362	230,650	304,429
Nature Conservation	177,186	1,218,861	1,396,047	1,582,924
Environmental Education & Training	72,222	172,776	244,998	231,842
Membership Support Costs	109,578	-	109,578	106,115
Organisation Support Costs	295,371	68,436	363,807	369,663
Depreciation	16,161	24,321	40,482	29,773
Bank Interest & Charges	5,085	-	5,085	5,109
Auditors Remuneration	4,336	-	4,336	4,725
(Profit)/Loss on Disposal of Fixed Asset	-	-	-	(841)
	706,227	1,688,756	2,394,983	2,633,739

11 Expenditure on Charitable Activities

	Staff Costs £	Other direct costs £	2024 £	2023 £
Landfill Environmental Projects	22,370	208,280	230,650	304,428
Nature Conservation	779,733	616,314	1,396,047	1,582,924
Environmental Education	214,924	30,074	244,998	231,843
Membership Support Costs	47,963	61,616	109,579	106,115
Organisation Support Costs	224,837	138,969	363,806	369,663
Other- Depreciation, Bank Charges, Audit.	-	49,903	49,903	38,766
	1,289,827	1,105,156	2,394,983	2,633,739

Other Direct costs Environmental Projects	Landfill Environmental Projects	Nature Conservation Projects	Environmental Education Projects	Membership & Organisation Support Costs	Total
£	£	£	£	£	£
Direct Project Costs	204,362	140,051	15,851	20,634	380,898
Premises Costs	3,853	32,395	1,792	47,546	85,586
Postage, Printing & Stationery	-	4,615	197	47,698	52,510
Staff Travel and Vehicle Costs	65	54,413	1,785	15,813	72,076
Contracted Services	-	341,488	6,079	26,775	374,342
Staff Training	-	13,883	3,831	1,701	19,415
Council Costs	-	-	-	5,947	5,947
Information Technology	-	29,469	539	34,471	64,479
	208,280	616,314	30,074	200,585	1,055,253

Notes to the accounts

12 Depreciation

	Unrestricted Funds 2024 £	Restricted Funds 2024 £	Unrestricted Funds 2023 £	Restricted Funds 2023 £
Motor Vehicles	2,157	15,629	3,499	12,270
Equipment	5,759	8,692	5,759	-
Buildings	8,245	-	8,245	-
	16,161	24,321	17,503	12,270

13 Staff Costs

	2024 £	2023 £
Salaries and Wages	1,220,458	1,044,198
Social Security Costs	109,549	93,964
Pension Contributions	87,090	64,617
	1,417,097	1,202,779

One employee received emoluments of more than £60,000. The average number of employees during the year, calculated on the basis of full time equivalents, was 37.9 (2023- 33.6).

The key management personnel comprise the trustees and the members of the senior management team.

The total employee benefits of the key management personnel was £202,497. (2023: £287,960).

14 Transfer Between Funds

	2024 £	2023 £
Landfill Fund Administration Costs	26,288	20,166
Project Contribution to Organisation Support Costs	134,439	213,101
Match Funding for DAERA Funding	(9,160)	(10,005)
	151,567	223,262

15 Board Remuneration and Related Party Transactions

No members of the Board received any remuneration during the year in their capacity as Trustees.

No travel and subsistence costs were paid on behalf of trustees during the year. (2023 £NIL).

No travel and subsistence costs were paid to trustees during the year. (2023 £NIL).

No trustees received payment for professional services supplied to the charity (2023 £NIL).

No balances are owed to trustees at 31st March 2024.

Notes to the accounts

16 Fixed Assets

	Nature Reserves	Land & Buildings	Motor Vehicles	Equipment & Computers	TOTAL
	£	£	£	£	£
COST OR VALUATION					
At 1 April 2023	1,240,158	589,355	171,863	158,795	2,160,171
Additions	-	-	49,538	23,088	72,626
Disposals	-	-	-	-	-
At 31 March 2024	1,240,158	589,355	221,401	181,883	2,232,797
DEPRECIATION					
At 1 April 2023	-	173,530	100,387	59,513	333,430
Charge for year	-	8,245	18,457	14,450	41,152
Disposals	-	-	-	-	-
At 31 March 2024	-	181,775	118,844	73,963	374,582
NBV at 31 March 2024	1,240,158	407,580	102,557	107,920	1,858,215
<i>including restricted assets of</i>	<i>1,200,158</i>	<i>150,000</i>	<i>101,092</i>	<i>101,313</i>	<i>1,552,563</i>

Glendun farm has been included at probate value of £150,000.

17 Debtors

	Unrestricted Funds 2024	Restricted Funds 2024	Unrestricted Funds 2023	Restricted Funds 2023
	£	£	£	£
Debtors and Prepayments	142,650	155,070	85,958	73,530
Grants	135,227	83,656	-	48,342
Tax Refunds Due	19,042	-	18,976	-
	296,919	238,726	104,934	121,872

18 Creditors Falling Due Within One Year

	Unrestricted Funds 2024	Restricted Funds 2024	Unrestricted Funds 2023	Restricted Funds 2023
	£	£	£	£
Sundry Creditors and Accrued Expenditure	208,608	117,882	151,549	439,682

19 Creditors Falling Due After More Than One Year

	Unrestricted Funds 2024	Restricted Funds 2024	Unrestricted Funds 2023	Restricted Funds 2023
	£	£	£	£
Capital Grants	7,436	342,816	8,107	342,816

Notes to the accounts

20 Movement on Unrestricted Funds

	Unrestricted Funds 2024	Unrestricted Funds 2023
	£	£
Opening Balance	989,251	988,414
Surplus for the Year	57,095	23,158
Transfer to Fund for the Future	-	(22,321)
Closing Balance	1,046,346	989,251

21 Movement on Restricted Funds

	Restricted Funds 2024	Restricted Funds 2023
	£	£
Opening Balance	1,989,544	1,485,935
Net Income/([Expenditure]) for the year	652,519	500,417
Transfer from/(to) Fund for the Future	-	3,192
Closing Balance	2,642,063	1,989,544

Some funders pay in advance and other funders issue payment only after the expenditure has been incurred. The movement on restricted funds in any year is a result of timing differences between receipts of grants for restricted projects and the related expenditure.

22 Movement on Fund for the Future

	Designated Fund for the Funds 2024	Designated Fund for the Funds 2023
	£	£
Opening Balance	209,486	190,357
Transfer from Donations and Legacies	-	22,321
UW Contribution to the Purchase of Land	-	(3,192)
Closing Balance	209,486	209,486

Fund for the Future includes monies from gifts in wills and legacy donations and other donations, including restricted donations. It will be used to purchase and manage nature reserves, protect key species as well as educate and support future wildlife champions.

23 Contingent Liability

A portion of grants received may become repayable if the charity fails to comply with the terms of the relevant letters of offer.

24 Taxation

As a charity, Ulster Wildlife Trust is exempt from tax on income and gains to the extent that these are applied to its charitable objects. Ulster Wildlife is registered for VAT in relation to some specific taxable supplies. The net amount payable on taxable supplies was £17,525 in the period (2023 £13,496).

25 Company Status

Ulster Wildlife Trust Limited is a private company limited by guarantee and consequently does not have share capital. Each of the members is liable to contribute an amount not exceeding £1 towards the assets of the company in the event of liquidation.



Welcoming new barn owl chicks at David Sandford's farm in Co. Down



Ulster Wildlife is Northern Ireland's largest local nature conservation charity. We are working to bring nature back across Northern Ireland and secure a wilder future where people and nature are thriving together.

Join now and together we can make a real difference
www.ulsterwildlife.org/join

Get in touch

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- 📷 instagram.com/ulsterwildlife
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We are proud to be one of **46 independent Wildlife Trusts** working across the UK



Ulster Wildlife Trust, (operating as Ulster Wildlife) is registered with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland NIC101848 and is a not-for-profit company incorporated in Northern Ireland, limited by guarantee NI 12711.

Annual return

Our Year for Nature, People and Climate

Ulster Wildlife Trust

Annual Report & Accounts 23-24



**Ulster
Wildlife**



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Foreword

As we reflect on the year April 2023 to March 2024, we do so with a sense of pride for all that has been achieved in turning the tide from nature loss to recovery and driving meaningful action for people and climate.

Forging ahead with our Strategy to 2030, we have made significant progress against our ambitious goals and transformations under the leadership of our late CEO Jennifer Fulton, who sadly passed away in May 2024. From addressing climate change through nature-based solutions and supporting farmers to deliver for wildlife, to community-based action for wildlife on the ground, we have played a leading role in ensuring the value of nature is recognised and action is taken for it to recover. Jennifer's legacy will continue to live on in the many initiatives she spearheaded to help nature recover. More recently, we were saddened at the passing of board member Joe Breen after a short illness. We pay tribute to Joe for his marine expertise and guidance – he will be sorely missed by us all. A full tribute to Jennifer and Joe can be found on page 4.

Landscape-scale recovery reached new heights as our peatland restoration work and team expanded during the year, enabling us to restore more of these precious habitats across Northern Ireland. This is not only vital in helping to combat climate change but also reduces flood risk, improves water quality and boosts biodiversity.

Species recovery gained momentum with one of the most successful breeding years for barn owls since our conservation work began. Additionally, we celebrated the phenomenal expansion of pine martens and the remarkable return of breeding ospreys to Co. Fermanagh.

Public support and desire for a healthy natural world have manifested in many ways: from the amazing transformations of community spaces driven by our Nextdoor Nature programme and the enthusiasm for our youth-engagement initiatives to the thousands who have joined our 'Let Nature In' wildlife gardening initiative. Support continues to grow rapidly, with more members and an expanding volunteer base, establishing a real force for change.

All of this is made possible thanks to dedication and unstinting efforts of our staff and volunteer team, and our skilled Board Members, alongside you: our members, supporters, funders and partners. Your role in the fight against the twin nature and climate crises is vital. We look forward buoyed by the successes over this last year and confident that there is much more we can achieve together for local wildlife and wild places.



John Witchell
Chair of Ulster Wildlife

Tribute to Jennifer and Joe



Jennifer Fulton,
Chief Executive 2012-2024

Jennifer joined Ulster Wildlife as Chief Executive in 2012 and led the charity with unwavering passion, energy, and dedication, championing our efforts for nature's recovery. During her 12-year tenure, Jennifer made a profound impact on nature conservation, climate action, and community engagement in Northern Ireland, laying the groundwork for significant progress in reversing nature loss and promoting recovery efforts. One of her early accomplishments was securing new office premises for the charity at McClelland House in 2015, ensuring the organisation had a stable base from which to grow. With a background in agriculture, Jennifer recognised the crucial role of farmers in nature's recovery. She was instrumental in developing Ulster Wildlife's Environmental Farming Scheme Group programme in Fermanagh, which now involves over 500 members managing more than 50,000 hectares of land for nature.

Her foresight into the importance of nature-based solutions in combating climate change led to a major peatland restoration initiative across Northern Ireland and cross-border from 2017 to 2022. This work has since become a core focus for the organisation, with ongoing restoration efforts. Jennifer also championed marine conservation, particularly the role of blue carbon habitats like seagrass and shellfish beds, overseeing the establishment of Northern Ireland's first native oyster nursery in 2022.

Her commitment to sustainability was evident in her efforts to



© Jennifer with HRH King Charles at the launch of the UK Squirrel Accord

drive Ulster Wildlife toward net zero by 2030, including creating a sustainability policy to reduce carbon emissions. Jennifer's landscape-scale approach to conservation led to the acquisition of significant nature reserves, including Glenullin Bog and Haughey's Bog, and the expansion of Slievenacloy to create a larger, more connected space for nature. This approach also influenced collaboration with the Department for Infrastructure to promote biodiversity along road networks.

She was a strong advocate for species conservation, particularly for the red squirrel. Jennifer led a UK-wide conservation project and sat on the advisory group for the UK Squirrel Accord, positioning Ulster Wildlife as a leader in this area. Her science-first approach saw her challenge DAERA's proposed badger cull, advocating for more ethical alternatives.

Jennifer's passion for inspiring young environmental leaders was evident in her development of the Grassroots Challenge programme, engaging hundreds of young people in nature conservation. She also managed an education programme with Belfast City Council, connecting thousands of schoolchildren with nature.

Jennifer's leadership helped Ulster Wildlife navigate the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic, ensuring the charity emerged stronger. Her passing is a significant loss, but her legacy of collaboration, leadership and progress will continue to inspire the charity and its supporters.



Joe Breen,
Board Member 2022-2024

Joe Breen OBE was a passionate advocate for marine conservation and a dedicated environmentalist whose work has left an enduring legacy. Joe became a Board Member of Ulster Wildlife following his retirement from DAERA's Marine Division, and brought an invaluable depth of marine science expertise to the charity and was an unwavering champion for nature.

Throughout his distinguished career, Joe was recognised for his remarkable contributions to marine conservation and environmental protection, earning him the prestigious OBE. His impact on marine conservation was profound; he began his career as a diver and scientist at Ulster Museum, managed the Exploris Aquarium, and later led a team at DAERA investigating damage to the unique horse mussel beds in Strangford Lough. Joe's efforts were instrumental in protecting the wildlife and seabed around Northern Ireland's coast, ensuring that these vital ecosystems were preserved for future generations.

Joe's knowledge, expertise, and passion for marine life were unmatched, and his contributions will be greatly missed by all who had the privilege of working with him. His commitment to protecting our natural world, particularly the rich marine environments he loved so dearly, will continue to inspire those who follow in his footsteps.

Highlights of our year for wildlife



© Simon Gray

April 23

Hughes Insurance supports 'Let Nature In' campaign

We partnered with Hughes Insurance to launch our 'Let Nature In' campaign, encouraging 5,000 households across Northern Ireland to participate in our annual wildlife gardening initiative. This campaign is crucial, as one in nine species in Northern Ireland, including once-common garden visitors like hedgehogs and house sparrows, is at risk of extinction. With support from Hughes, we created an engaging information pack, complete with wildflower seeds, to help people get started. Sign up now at ulstewildlife.org/let-nature-in.



© Ronald Surgenor

May 23

Glenarm gets new native oyster nursery

Native oysters, one of our most threatened marine species, are set to flourish once more along the Glenarm coast with the establishment of our new native oyster nursery at Glenarm Marina. The nursery, housing over 800 mature native oysters suspended in cages, could see millions of larvae released into surrounding waters every year. This initiative aims to help these ocean superheroes bounce back from the brink of extinction, boosting biodiversity, improving water quality and reducing pollution levels – a win-win for people and nature's recovery.



© Mike Snelle

June 23

Phenomenal resurgence of the native pine marten

Our survey of pine martens, red squirrels and grey squirrels revealed that the presence of pine martens in woodlands has nearly doubled over the past five years. Once common throughout Northern Ireland, pine martens experienced a significant decline due to habitat loss and persecution in the 19th century. Today, they are found across all six counties, indicating a significant expansion beyond their traditional stronghold in County Fermanagh. This resurgence is promising news for red squirrels, which have adapted to coexist with these native predators, unlike invasive grey squirrels.



© Andy Rouse 2020VISION

July 23

Endangered lapwing return to Co Down bog

Endangered lapwings made a return to a Co. Down bog for the first time in many years. Two breeding pairs were discovered at Lecale Fens Special Area of Conservation, thanks to our restoration work with local farmer John Crea. Like many other ground-nesting birds, lapwings have suffered major declines over the last 40 years owing to habitat loss and changes in farming practices. Our work eliminating invasive species and scrub has helped to rejuvenate this designated peatland site, making it an attractive breeding ground for this red-listed species.



© Ronald Surgenor

August 23

Ospreys breed in Ireland for the first time in over 200 years

A pair of ospreys successfully bred at a confidential nest site in Co. Fermanagh, marking the first occurrence in Ireland in over 200 years! This magnificent bird of prey, also known as the fish hawk, naturally re-colonised the area and produced at least two, possibly three, chicks – the first known wild osprey chicks on the island of Ireland in modern times. The historic discovery was made by Giles Knight, our Environmental Farming Scheme Advisor, who had been observing the breeding pair for the last three seasons alongside his local farm visits.



September 23

Cows with collars transform conservation efforts at Slievenacloy

At Slievenacloy Nature Reserve in the Belfast Hills, over 25 conservation cattle were equipped with state-of-the-art GPS collars to aid in the restoration of this designated grassland site and enhance biodiversity. These collars allow us to guide the cattle into specific areas within the 258-hectare Area of Special Scientific Interest where grazing is most needed, using audio signals, all managed via an app. Already, the cattle have started to open up the grassland and increase the diversity of the habitat by making space for a greater variety of wildflowers, such as orchids.

Highlights of our year for wildlife



October 23

Wave of support from Wilson Resources

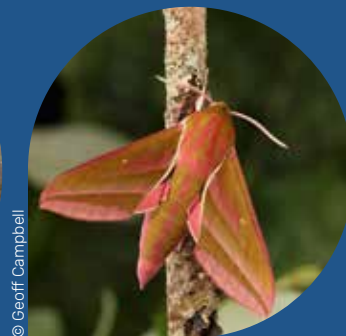
Thanks to a generous donation from Wilson Resources, we have been able to offer a one-year graduate marine conservation internship, to work with our marine team on blue carbon and species restoration projects. As well as providing an additional staffing resource, our marine intern will gain valuable, hands-on experience and training to progress their future career in the sector. This support builds on Wilson Resources' ongoing contributions to our blue carbon habitat restoration efforts, including their donations to our native oyster nurseries.



November 23

Haughey's Bog set to be transformed

We partnered with the An Creagán Centre to transform a former commercially harvested bog near Omagh into Northern Ireland's first demonstration hub for peatland restoration. Over the next ten years, more than 30 hectares of severely degraded habitat – equivalent to 74 football pitches – will be restored to help bring nature back, improve water quality, reduce flood risk and combat climate change. By employing best practice techniques, we will rewet and revitalise Haughey's Bog, allowing plants and wildlife to recover and enabling the site to function as a carbon sink.



© Geoff Campbell

December 23

Appeal launched to safeguard nature's havens

We launched our annual fundraising appeal to raise vital funds to safeguard the 18 precious wildlife havens in our care. From wildflower-rich grasslands to ancient woodlands, our nature reserves provide a vital refuge for wildlife such as red squirrels and orchids to survive, thrive and spread across the countryside. Thanks to the generosity of our members and supporters, we raised over £10,000. This support will help us continue our vital work from carrying out practical conservation tasks and maintaining access to surveying wildlife.



January 24

Barn owls defy odds with surprise winter brood

A pair of barn owls at Ballycruttle Farm, near Downpatrick, made January headlines by welcoming an unusually late winter brood. Four healthy chicks were discovered by our species conservation team in November, marking the latest known barn owl brood in Northern Ireland to date. Typically, barn owl eggs in Northern Ireland are laid in April, with chicks fledging in June or July. Despite the challenges posed by wet weather and floods, the owls defied the odds. All four chicks were ringed in partnership with British Trust for Ornithology and RSPB NI before successfully fledging in December.



February 24

Partnership for peatlands underway

We're helping to facilitate a new Peatland Collaborative and Technical Network to enhance collaboration among organisations involved in peatland restoration. Peatlands are one of Northern Ireland's greatest natural assets, storing over half of our land-based carbon, filtering water and providing habitat for iconic wildlife. However, over 80% are in poor condition. Restoring peatlands is a cost-effective solution to the nature and climate crises. The Network will coordinate actions, share knowledge and standardise monitoring methods, ensuring accurate reporting and supporting future restoration efforts.



© Andy Mearns

March 24

Power NI partners for species action

We renewed our partnership with Power NI, with a focus on protecting three native species – the barn owl, red squirrel and hedgehog – and their habitats across Northern Ireland. Through financial support and public outreach, we aim to encourage the public to help with species conservation by recording sightings and raising awareness of actions they can take to help. This builds upon our successful peatland partnership with Power NI, which provided financial support for restoration initiatives and helped to raise public awareness about the importance of peatlands and their role in mitigating climate change.

Bringing nature back

Our new strategy to put nature into recovery by 2030 has ambitious goals and builds upon our work over the last 45 years to deliver impactful change for nature. It drives us towards our vision of a wilder future, where everyone is inspired to get involved in nature's recovery, and where wildlife plays a key role in addressing the nature and climate emergencies. Although it is a bold and complex challenge, it is a necessity — and the solution to the very real and present dangers that nature and people face in the midst of a climate and nature emergency.

Our ability to galvanize people to take action, to work collaboratively to achieve the greatest impact for nature, and our knowledge, experience, 'localness' and innovative ways of working, are our core strengths. Together, and with the support of local communities, farmers, landowners, businesses, and our members who stand with us, we are in the best place possible to turn our vision into a reality — and ensure the recovery of our natural world.

Public Benefit

- The Trustees of Ulster Wildlife have taken into account the Charity Commission's guidance on Public Benefit, and consider it fully when planning and reviewing the charity's actions and outcomes and in planning our future activities.
- This Trustees' Report shows how we performed against our strategic outcomes in 2023/24.
- Ulster Wildlife's charitable objectives as set out in our Articles of Association can be found on page 33.

Our Vision

A wilder future where people and nature are thriving together

Our Purpose

Our purpose is to protect and restore nature on land and at sea. We will play our part in ending the climate and ecological emergencies, creating a society where nature is valued and is part of our daily lives.

Our Strategic Outcomes for 2030

1. NATURE - Nature is in recovery and wildlife is thriving across Northern Ireland.

2. PEOPLE - More people are taking positive action for nature and climate and are benefitting from time spent in nature.

3. CLIMATE - Nature-based solutions are playing a central role in addressing climate change.

Outcome 1 Nature

Nature is in recovery and wildlife is thriving across Northern Ireland

With one in nine species at risk of extinction here, we need to reverse the decline and bring nature back. It has become clear that protecting what we have left is no longer enough. It is our aim to create new spaces for nature by connecting habitats and restoring landscapes, and by working collaboratively to help species and habitats recover.

850 hectares of land managed for wildlife (equivalent to 1190 football pitches)

500 farmers and landowners received advice

50k ha of farms whose management we influenced.

21 barn owl nest-boxes erected in key locations this year.



One of the barn owl chicks in Co. Down.



Barn Owls

In 2023, our barn owl conservation efforts saw remarkable success with several exciting developments in our work to help these iconic farmland birds recover.

This year, we celebrated the highest number of known fledgling chicks in Northern Ireland, from both sites we monitor and sites monitored by others. This was thanks to a successful breeding season and the formation of new pairs. An unexpected highlight was a very late brood in Co. Down in late 2023.

We worked closely with many landowners to help provide the optimal conditions for barn owls to thrive which culminated in the development of our new guidance document 'Improving Land for Barn Owls'. Twenty-one nest boxes were erected in strategic locations using 'Nature Recovery Network' principles and our very first nest camera was installed to gather valuable data on the secret lives of these elusive birds, with more added throughout the winter in preparation for the 2024 breeding season.

Our newly implemented sightings database is proving effective, and we received nearly 120 records of both barn owls and long-eared owls across the 2023/24 season.

Additionally, we conducted various talks and events to educate youth groups, the general public and farmers about barn owls and the challenges they face. In partnership with RSPB NI and the Northern Ireland Raptor Study Group, we organised an event for farmers and landowners. We also shared barn owl knowledge with the British Trust for Ornithology, BirdWatch Ireland and the Barn Owl Trust.

Red squirrel © Adam Gerrard



Red Squirrels

We released the results from our 2022 Squirrel and Pine Marten Survey which revealed a significant increase in pine marten presence across Northern Ireland. This long-term data is crucial for assessing trends and guiding conservation efforts to protect red squirrels.

Our newly implemented sightings database has proven effective, with nearly 700 records of red squirrels, grey squirrels and pine martens since its launch last year. These records are invaluable and identified six woodlands in 2023 where red squirrels appeared for the first time.

We met with all of the red squirrel volunteer groups to explore how we could further support their indispensable conservation work. We also engaged with all of the local council biodiversity officers to enhance the protection of red squirrels on their properties. Collaborations with NIEA, the Northern Ireland Squirrel Forum and the UK Squirrel Accord continue to drive efforts to restore red squirrels to their former range.

Throughout the year, we held various talks to raise awareness about red squirrels and participated in a successful Red Squirrel Awareness Week in October.

Finally, we teamed up again with Belfast Zoo, NIEA and the National Trust to carry out a further release of red squirrels at Castle Ward estate, near Strangford.

MSc student Helen Peck with hedgehog home



Hedgehogs

We continued our collaboration with NUI Galway on the Irish Hedgehog Survey, to help find out more about these much-loved mammals, primarily promoting hedgehog sightings.

We eagerly await the results from the three-year Irish Hedgehog Survey and look forward to sharing insights on the state of our local hedgehog population. Additionally, we hosted an MSc student from Queen's University Belfast to conduct a density study using camera traps to assess hedgehog populations in various habitats, including gardens, woodlands and farmland.

We have also been raising awareness of hedgehogs and encouraging people to create hedgehog-friendly gardens through our 'Let Nature In' wildlife gardening programme, which we re-launched with sponsorship from Hughes Insurance. As hedgehogs increasingly rely on urban environments, our gardens play a crucial role in their protection. Through these efforts, we aim to foster safer and more welcoming habitats for this charismatic species.

Orchids at the Umbra Nature Reserve



Nature Reserves

Our nature reserves cover nearly 850 hectares of land spread across 19 sites that include some of Northern Ireland's most important habitats and species. The integration of technology has played an increasingly vital role in the management and protection of these special places during the year.

From simple GPS habitat mapping to satellite tracking of grazing animals and high-quality trail cameras, innovative techniques are enhancing our conservation efforts. Looking ahead, AI technology is expected to further revolutionise our approach. However, many tasks still require traditional hard work and physical effort.

This year's conservation highlights included mowing part of the dune slacks at Umbra and clearing the glades at Straidkilly to help wildflowers and pollinators flourish, haloing ancient oaks at Glenarm to prolong their survival and removing rats from the Isle of Muck to safeguard the seabird colony. These activities, along with countless other efforts, contribute significantly not only to conserving habitats and species but also to enhancing their resilience against emerging threats such as invasive species and climate change.

We adopted the 'Nature Recovery Network' approach to the management of our nature reserves, evaluating how they function within the wider landscape and their role in fostering a healthy environment. Maintaining these vital sites demands considerable effort from our dedicated staff team and volunteers, alongside support from our members and funders.

Nature Recovery Networks

We've continued to support the development of ways to create 'more, bigger, better and joined-up' wildlife-rich spaces by working with key stakeholders. Additionally, we have turned our focus inwards to strategically implement these 'Nature Recovery Network' principles at Ulster Wildlife for the benefit of both wildlife and people.

Over the past year, we have been exploring the establishment of Nature Recovery Zones (NRZs) around key nature reserves. This approach, originally developed by the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, involves collaborating closely with neighbouring landowners and farmers to expand wildlife-friendly areas beyond the boundaries of existing nature reserves, effectively creating 'super reserves.'

In March 2024, we visited Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust to meet with key staff and to learn more about how this approach is being implemented on the ground. The visit provided valuable insights and plenty of ideas which we can consider in Northern Ireland. By focusing on NRZs, we aim to create larger, interconnected habitats that support greater biodiversity and resilience. This initiative represents a significant step forward in our commitment to conservation and the creation of thriving, connected ecosystems.

Knowledge exchange trip to Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust



Skylark © Stefan Johansson



Protected Sites

Our collaborative efforts with the Ministry of Defence (MOD) to manage Ballykinler and Magilligan Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) continue to yield positive results, enhancing the biodiversity of these important nature sites.

To protect the unique dune and grassland habitats, dense stands of gorse, sea buckthorn and bracken, that inhibit the growth of crucial plant species, have been systematically removed. Recognising the importance of scrub as a component of dune habitat, some areas have intentionally been left intact to provide food and shelter for birds, mammals and invertebrates. Additionally, we have worked closely with the sites' graziers, developing grazing plans that include optimal grazing practices for sheep and cattle to maintain the key species found in these habitats.

Our monitoring efforts of priority species continued at both sites, including skylark, meadow pipit, petalwort, and the scarce crimson and gold moth. This year, we have enjoyed fruitful partnerships with Butterfly Conservation, Buglife, Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust, and other stakeholders, all of whom contribute to the essential conservation work at these MOD-owned sites.

Environmental Farming Scheme

In 2023, our Environmental Farming Scheme (EFS) Group Programme, funded by DAERA, entered its seventh year and continued to grow, hitting a landmark 500 members. The scheme is designed to support farmers to deliver nature conservation at scale through agri-environment schemes.

We collaborated with 80 farmers to create new EFS Agreements, positively managing over 4,000 hectares of land and injecting an additional half a million pounds annually into rural communities. This has brought the number of EFS Agreements in our group to over 350, representing nearly a quarter of all EFS Higher Agreements across Northern Ireland.

We have also improved our service to farmers, by continuing to specialise in grassland and peatland management and bringing in RSPB NI as a Group partner to support farmers fortunate enough to have curlew and other breeding waders on their land.

As farming policy rapidly evolves with an increasing focus on carbon and efficiency, we have engaged our members through environmental education programmes and farm walks, helping them understand the impacts of these new policies and make informed decisions to maximise their benefits within their own farming systems.

Our collaboration with the Leitrim Sustainable Agriculture Group has allowed us to share experiences of High Nature Value farming and explore best practices across two neighbouring counties with similar land types but different policy regimes. This partnership has provided farmers with cross-border funding and training initiatives, enhancing their resilience in the face of global market pressures, climate change and diseases such as bTB.

The successor to the Environmental Farming Scheme, 'Farming with Nature,' was included in recent policy announcements. Drawing on our extensive experience with current and past schemes, we have contributed to the co-design of this new initiative, working with farming bodies, other eNGOs, and DAERA. Our efforts have focused on assessing the benefits of the Group approach for farmer uptake, understanding and compliance with EFS Higher. We have demonstrated increased scheme uptake with Group support and targeted coverage of protected habitats and species. Additionally, we have identified barriers to scheme entry and are collaborating with the Department to ensure future schemes are accessible, rewarding and beneficial for wildlife.

Engaging with farmers through EFS and the Leitrim Sustainable Agricultural Group; Marsh Trillory © Simon Gray

Public Affairs, Policy and Legislation

The return of the NI Executive in February 2024 was welcome news, and will enable us to step-up our engagement with key politicians, Ministers and decision-makers in the coming year.

During 2023/24, we responded to several key government consultations, including Wildfires in Northern Ireland, the DFI Resource Budget Equality Impact Assessment, and the Carbon Budget. Additionally, we submitted evidence as part of the Office for Environmental Protection's review of protected sites in Northern Ireland. Our involvement continued in the input and co-design of the new 'Farming with Nature' agri-environment scheme being developed by DAERA.

Despite our evidence and significant concerns regarding the impacts on marine biodiversity, the legal challenge for the Islandmagee Gas Storage project was dismissed. However, this was eventually overturned by an appeal in June 2024.

As a leading member of the Northern Ireland Marine Task Force (NIMTF), we participated in several consultations to ensure NI's marine environment is healthy, resilient, and productive. This included advocating for a ban on the sale of plastic-containing wet wipes in the UK, which was successful. Our response to the Office for Environmental Protection's Call for Evidence on Marine Drivers and Pressures to the UK Achieving Good Environmental Status emphasised the importance of the marine environment. Additionally, we continued to engage with the development of the Offshore Renewable Energy Action Plan and Climate Sectoral plans in conjunction with the Department for the Economy.

Farming with Nature: The Flanagan's Farm

Overlooking the shores of Lough Melvin, the Flanagan family has farmed in this corner of Fermanagh for generations. Their superb species-rich grasslands exemplify 'High Nature Value' farmland. For 7 years, the family have been members of our Environmental Farming Scheme (EFS) Group Programme, which supports farmers' efforts to deliver nature conservation at scale.

Through successive agri-environment regimes, traditional management has created fields and meadows teeming with flowering plants and buzzing with pollinators. As Brian takes over from his father Bennie, he is justifiably proud of the wildlife these fields support. His approach is as much second nature as it is High Nature Value; he knows these fields intimately.

Brian is an enthusiastic and engaged member of our EFS Group. He finds that Group meetings add significant value to farm visits. The flexible Group design allows farmers to learn and share their experiences collectively while offering valuable two-way feedback during one-on-one mentoring sessions, free from fear of censure. Annual 'Condition Assessments', a complimentary service for members, provide helpful insights, enabling farmers to participate in the scheme confidently and avoid inspection difficulties.

Speaking about how EFS complements his farming style, Brian said, "Scheme payments offer a regular and welcome additional income stream but can conflict with increasingly variable annual conditions. In short, it feels like farming to the calendar, not the season. Pre-set cutting dates and restrictions on even light dressings of nutrients sometimes present a challenge to delivering environmental benefits. Harbours the rare blue-eyed grass can be both a pain and a privilege!"

Compliance and financial benefits are only part of the story. Brian emphasised, "As a family, we have always managed our farm according to its yearly needs. The presence of 37 plant species in a quadrat is a testament to this. Any new scheme needs to acknowledge and encourage our ability to deliver, rather than simply dictating how to do it."

As DAERA's new agri-environment scheme awaits in the wings, Brian is considering his options. "Any scheme must be appealing to significant numbers of High Nature Value farmers. We should be able to deliver both biodiversity and carbon capture. The support offered by Ulster Wildlife, combined with a more results-based approach, is central to future success."

Brian Flanagan inspecting his fields and wildflower meadows, which are teeming with life



The rare blue-eyed grass – one of the many wildflowers thriving on the Flanagan's farm

Outcome 2 People

More people are taking positive action for nature and climate and are benefitting from time spent in nature

Without more people taking action themselves, the fight to protect nature and tackle the climate crisis is an insurmountable task. We need to engage and empower people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities to take action and stand up for nature, and also to reconnect people with wild places and green spaces. By increasing the number of people who can speak up for nature, our collective voice will be louder and reach further than ever before.

Corporate volunteers at Slieve Donard Nature Reserve

123 active volunteers

13,669 members

3,800 people learned about nature at our events

2,380 gardens signed up to our wildlife gardening campaign

22 Youth Forum members

Wild Youth participants enjoying a campfire at Bog Meadows Nature Reserve



Wild Youth

This innovative programme enhances the wellbeing of young people in and around the Belfast Hills through nature-based activities. Delivered in conjunction with Belfast Hills Partnership and funded by the National Lottery Community Fund, Wild Youth has made a significant impact.

This year, 252 young people, many from youth clubs in north and west Belfast, completed 2,380 hours of Wild Youth programming with Ulster Wildlife. Activities ranged from pond-dipping at our Bog Meadows Nature Reserve to hiking Cave Hill. Participants not only enjoyed nature-based fun but also reported feeling happier and eager to bring their families back to the local green spaces they explored with Wild Youth.

Additionally, we launched our first-ever Wild Youth Leader training, a weekend-long residential that provided nine young people with hands-on experience in leading their own nature-based wellbeing activities. This new initiative aims to empower young leaders to foster a deeper connection with nature within their communities.

Wildlife Watch celebration event at Bog Meadows Nature Reserve



Wildlife Watch Groups

Our Wildlife Watch Groups for children continue to flourish, with 47 members across three groups in Lisburn, Bloomfield and Bog Meadows.

These groups, run by dedicated volunteers, meet monthly to arrange fun and informative nature-based activities for children. This year, they have enjoyed bat walks and talks, wildflower planting, and learning all about birds at Orangefield Bird Day.

Ulster Wildlife's student placements have also helped out with the groups, teaching children how to spot wildlife from their windows and sharing insights about the small but mighty native oyster. A group celebration at our Bog Meadows Nature Reserve, in Belfast, allowed the children to explore and learn about its wildlife, making it a memorable event for all involved.

Youth Forum members at the COP28 Climate Change Rally in Belfast



Youth Forum

Our Youth Forum continues to thrive, with 22 active members providing a platform for young people to advocate for nature, participate in campaigns and take action for wildlife.

Throughout the year, members engaged in diverse activities such as birdwatching at Portmore Lough, learning about dragonflies at Montiagh's Moss, and assisting with red squirrel conservation. They also attended online talks and made their voices heard at the COP28 climate change rally in Belfast, where one member was invited to speak at the post-rally event. Additionally, Youth Forum members attended the Path to Net Zero event, contributing to Northern Ireland's first Climate Action Plan for 2023-2027, organised in conjunction with the EA Youth Service and DAERA.



Young people who attended the Binevenagh Youth Residential

Young people monitoring plants at the Binevenagh Youth Residential



Binevenagh Youth Residential

In 2023, twenty-two young people attended our week-long summer residential run in collaboration with the Magilligan Field Centre and Binevenagh Landscape Partnership.

Supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the residential provides young people with the opportunity to explore and connect with our nearby Umbra Nature Reserve while completing a range of activities to achieve their Gold Duke of Edinburgh's Award. Activities include everything from peatland restoration tasks and building barn owl boxes to pond maintenance.

Since 2017, Ulster Wildlife has helped over 150 young people earn their Gold Duke of Edinburgh's Award. The residential helps not only foster a love for nature but also equips young people with valuable conservation skills and a sense of achievement.

Moragaine, our New to Nature Reserves Assistant, using an Allen soythe



New to Nature

We welcomed two trainees last year as part of the New to Nature programme, funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. This initiative provided paid work placements and life-changing experiences for young people disadvantaged in the labour market, while building capacity in the environmental sector.

Over the past year, our Nature Reserves Assistant contributed significantly to protecting and conserving wildlife and wild places as a valued member of our Nature Reserves Team. Additionally, our Urban Green Spaces Assistant worked closely with the Community Engagement Team to build a community garden and nature pond at Bog Meadows Nature Reserve. They also assisted in running 'Wild Wellbeing' sessions for young people and helped bring communities together, providing the advice and support needed to help nature flourish on their doorstep and leave a lasting natural legacy.

The programme was delivered through a partnership of Groundwork, The Prince's Trust, Disability Rights UK, and Mission Diverse.

Bog Meadows community garden volunteers



Bog Meadows - Our People, Our Places

Our efforts to foster community buy-in and ownership at Bog Meadows Nature Reserve continued to thrive, thanks to the support from the National Lottery Community Fund.

Last year, we offered a diverse array of programmes, including nature connection sessions, wildlife walks, a summer scheme, school visits, adult and youth volunteering opportunities, and a Wildlife Watch group for children. One of the year's many highlights was the Winter Solstice Lantern Walk, where everyone came together to create a magical winter wonderland for families in the nature reserve.

Our women's group, the 'Meadow Ladies', has flourished, with members regularly monitoring butterflies and providing a wildlife-friendly support network and social space.

With a grant from the Department for Infrastructure, we collaborated with a dedicated team of gardening volunteers, local community groups and businesses to create a 'Community Wildlife Garden.' This inviting space showcases a functional wildlife garden and offers the community a valuable place to connect with nature through health and wellbeing activities.

Barnardos Mulch & Munch project which we are helping to facilitate



Nextdoor Nature

In our second and final year of this project, we continued to collaborate with communities in south and east Belfast, employing a community-led approach to help nature flourish and providing support for groups to take action on their own terms.

Several new groups joined us this year, including Barnardos, RNIB and Hello Neighbour Hello Nature, alongside existing groups Connswater Housing and Glentoran FC.

Barnardos is revitalising an underutilised green space, with local women creating a sensory garden for themselves and their children. RNIB has established a gardening club beside Glentoran Football Club, which was filmed by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. Our engagement with the Roma Community continues to grow and develop. Additionally, we are collaborating with Hello Neighbour, Hello Nature, based at the Mersey Street apartments, to create more wildlife-friendly gardens.

The marine team raising awareness of MPAs at a coastal festival



Marine Protected Areas Community Engagement

This year, we embarked on a mission to promote the importance of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in Northern Ireland and to raise awareness of their value in protecting special marine habitats, species and features.

Starting in early spring 2024, we organised a programme of outreach events to foster community engagement and inspire action. These events included rockpool rambles, beach cleans, educational workshops and participation in various coastal festivals. In March 2024, we brought together partner organisations for a Marine Recovery Workshop to ensure we deliver an informed and comprehensive message when engaging with the public.

By highlighting the unique marine life and habitats protected within MPAs, we aim to promote informed decision-making and empower local stakeholders to contribute to the better management of their MPAs for both people and nature.



Bullfinch © Simon Gray

'Let Nature In' wildlife gardening starter kit



Let Nature In

We relaunched 'Let Nature In,' our wildlife gardening campaign designed to encourage people to create spaces for nature in their gardens.

With support from Hughes Insurance, we produced a new wildlife gardening starter kit, offering advice on supporting birds, insects, hedgehogs and more. We also garnered significant media attention following the launch and ran a successful giveaway with Cool FM, raising campaign awareness and driving sign-ups.

We now have over 2,300 households committed to enhancing wildlife in their outdoor spaces. Alongside their starter packs, participants receive quarterly wildlife gardening update emails filled with tips and advice on the best ways to garden for nature.

Glenullin playpark funded by the Landfill Communities Fund



Landfill Communities Fund

We helped distribute £194,000 of Landfill Communities Fund contributions from Fermanagh and Omagh District Council and Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council to 13 community and environmental projects.

The Landfill Communities Fund (LCF) is a grant scheme that enables operators of landfill sites to contribute a portion of the monies they pay as landfill tax directly to approved Environmental Bodies, such as Ulster Wildlife, for distribution to projects of environmental and public benefit.

2023 saw an increase in project activity with the effects of the pandemic winding down. For the remaining lifespan of contributions from our two landfill operators, we will continue to maximise the benefits of distributing funding to projects which are aligned with our own strategic goals of promoting health and wellbeing through enjoyment of the environment and rebuilding biodiversity.



Volunteers planting trees at Bog Meadows Nature Reserve

Bee & Butterfly walk at Slievenacloy for Ulster Wildlife members



Volunteers repairing fence posts at Slievenacloy Nature Reserve



Exclusive Member Events

During the winter, we successfully delivered another series of online talks, featuring guest speakers on topics ranging from raptors and marine mammals to gardening for wildlife.

For the spring and summer months, we planned an extensive programme of face-to-face events, many of which were exclusive to Ulster Wildlife members. These included guided wildlife walks, woodland foraging and coastal safaris. In September, over 100 members joined us for our AGM and Members' Day at the beautiful Montalto Estate, learning more about bees from our Conservation staff.

Volunteering

We have continued to expand our volunteer efforts by involving more people in crucial projects, such as developing a community garden at Bog Meadows Nature Reserve, conducting bird surveys with our peatlands team, and assisting with the restoration of our newly acquired Haughey's Bog.

Additionally, we have mentored six university placement students across various teams, providing them with hands-on conservation experience to enhance their academic learning. We continue to welcome new students and have introduced short-term project placements for individuals seeking field experience without a year-long commitment.

Our corporate volunteer groups continued to grow, with 18 companies providing 290 staff with the opportunity to volunteer on our nature reserves with a variety of conservation tasks. From path maintenance at Bog Meadows, meadow management at Balloo Wetland, fencing repairs at Slievenacloy, and controlling invasive species at Ballynahone Bog, support from corporate volunteers continues to be invaluable.



Benjamin helping with a Wild Youth pond clipping session



Benjamin and volunteers helping to create the new community wildlife garden at Bog Meadows.

New to Nature gives Benjamin a step on the career ladder

Benjamin Jamieson has been working with our Community Engagement Team as part of the New to Nature programme, funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. This exciting initiative offers young people paid one-year work placements in nature-focused roles, providing valuable experience and fostering diversity in the sector.

“Two years ago, the thought of leading a school group or giving a talk on birdwatching would have given me sleepless nights and shaky hands. Now, thanks to incredible support and training from Ulster Wildlife, these activities excite me!

A year ago, I started as the new Urban Greenspaces Assistant. Before this, I was working in retail but knew it wasn't my true calling. A friend told me about the New to Nature scheme, and it's been an incredible year.

The role enabled me to engage in all aspects of community involvement and also work occasionally on our nature reserves. This gave me the chance to learn from different project officers and gain a comprehensive understanding of community engagement and the diverse ways to connect with various groups. I've worked across Belfast, collaborated with organisations like RNIB, and engaged with individuals ranging from 5-year-old P1 pupils to people in their 80s.

It's hard to express how much this year has meant to me and its impact on my personal growth. From first aid training and gaining a teaching qualification to getting first-hand experience leading a youth group, this past year has undoubtedly given me the skills and confidence for the next step: moving to England to work as a Youth Engagement Officer with Shropshire Wildlife Trust.



Benjamin Jamieson
New to Nature - Urban Greenspaces Assistant



Outcome 3 Climate

Nature-based solutions are playing a critical role in addressing the impacts of climate change in Northern Ireland

We are in the midst of nature and climate crises and neither can be resolved in isolation. The natural world can provide its own solutions to combat and reverse these threats. We are promoting the implementation of nature-based solutions such as the restoration of peatlands and of coastal blue carbon habitats to provide carbon sequestration and storage while supporting resilient wildlife.

40 hectares of peatland restored

1,083 hectares of peatland surveyed

38 million litres of water filtered by native oysters across our nurseries

120 species identified on and surrounding the native oyster nurseries



Peatland restoration in action

Restoring peatlands for nature and climate

During the year, we expanded our peatland restoration efforts and staff team to meet the challenges and objectives set out in the draft NI Peatland Strategy, thanks to funding from DAERA and the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation.

A significant part of this year has involved training and upskilling our new staff members and establishing a new office in Co Tyrone with our project partners, An Creagán. Despite this, we still managed extensive on-the-ground mapping, surveying 1,083 hectares of peatland habitats with peat depth and condition categories mapped across Antrim, Tyrone and Down.

We also acquired a new drone capable of collecting LiDAR and high-resolution aerial imagery, and our team underwent training in its operation. The data collected has formed the basis for developing new peatland restoration plans for three areas.

In addition to these efforts, we restored 40 hectares of lowland raised bog in Co Tyrone and removed invasive vegetation from six hectares of fen in Co Down. We also initiated hydrological monitoring at several new sites to establish baselines before restoration begins.

A key element of this new long-term project is the creation of a Peatland Collaborative Network to help peatland restoration practitioners across Northern Ireland gain skills, share experiences and showcase successes. The first meeting of the Peatland Collaborative Network was held in February 2024 at Peatlands Park, with representatives from 20 different organisations attending and eager to participate. Moving forward, the Peatland Collaborative Network Officer will facilitate training, talks and workshops, and build a comprehensive database of all peatland restoration activities across Northern Ireland.

Finally, we have been collaborating with partners across Ireland to develop a proposal for PEACE Plus funding. This proposal aims to deliver more restoration at key sites and to develop even more restoration plans for the future.

Restoring blue carbon habitats and species

We expanded our native oyster restoration work with the installation of a third nursery at Belfast Harbour's Dobbin Pier.

Belfast Lough was once home to abundant native oyster beds, but intense overfishing, pollution and disease have caused populations to decline by 95% since the mid-1800s. To boost biodiversity, improve water quality, and support the recovery of this priority species, 600 mature native oysters have been placed in purpose-built cages in the waters of this commercial shipping channel, a first for Northern Ireland.

To assess how the oysters have settled into this unique environment, where the waters of the River Lagan and Belfast Lough mix, we have been monitoring oyster growth and associated biodiversity. Over the winter, glass eels (an early life stage of the endangered European eel) were discovered at the nursery on their impressive journey upriver. Beginning as eggs in the Sargasso Sea, the larvae travel around 4,000 miles via the Gulf Stream to reach the shores of Europe.

Throughout the year, more than 100 marine species have been found in and around the oyster cages across all three native oyster nurseries at Belfast Lough, Glenarm and Bangor Marina. These include colourful nudibranchs (a type of sea slug), juvenile fish, crabs and sponges.

At Bangor Marina, there are promising signs that native oysters have begun to settle on the immediate seabed, with the discovery of oyster spat. Oyster larvae tend to settle on other oyster shells, known as spat, forming complex reefs that provide both refuge and habitat for many organisms, including juvenile fish and crabs. This is a promising sign that the oysters are successfully reproducing and releasing larvae into the surrounding waters, aiding the recovery of the native oyster population. Soon, mini oyster reefs could be forming in our nurseries!

Belfast Oyster Nursery



Monitoring the oysters





Brendan conducting research on a raised bog with a fellow MSc student.

Student gets hands-on experience in peatland restoration

Brendan Byrne is a student at Queen's University Belfast and has been on placement with our Peatlands Team since January 2024. Brendan has already gained valuable hands-on experience to benefit his future career in nature conservation, learning from our team of experienced peatland practitioners.



Growing up in and around the Sperrins fostered my love of the outdoors and ignited my passion for protecting nature. With a desire to make a positive impact on the environment, a placement with Ulster Wildlife was the perfect fit.

Since joining the Peatlands Team, I have undertaken a project mapping native and invasive scrub species on Ballynahone Bog Nature Reserve to aid restoration plans. Learning to use the specialist ArcGIS software has enabled me to carry out this work and has equipped me with a valuable skill for my future career. I'll never forget the first time I watched the drone take off into the sky and soar kilometres overhead – it was an incredible experience!

Restoring peatlands is crucial for optimising their role in sequestering and storing carbon, and mitigating climate change. Many peatland sites are Areas of Special Scientific Interest and Special Areas of Conservation, home to rare and endangered species, so minimising bare peat is essential not only for wildlife but also to prevent acidification of our water sources.

From measuring peat depths in the beautiful uplands of Mullaghcarn to training as a first aid responder, I have gained experience in many areas within a short timeframe. I cannot thank Ulster Wildlife enough for this diverse and fulfilling placement, which has reinforced my desire to pursue a career in nature conservation.



Brendan assisting with species mapping on Ballynahone Bog Nature Reserve



Brendan Byrne
Peatland Restoration
Placement Student



Holy blue butterfly on bluebell © Ronald Surgenor

Thank you for Bringing Nature Back

As we reflect on the past year, we are incredibly grateful to our members, donors and other supporters for their unwavering passion and support. You are the driving force behind our shared mission of bringing nature back. With every donation, volunteer hour and membership subscription you are breathing life back into our wild places and the creatures that call them home – thank you!

Donations from business, gifts in wills and donations in lieu of flowers are entered into a special Nature and Climate Fund for the Future – the funds from which goes towards habitat restoration, species protection, education and land purchases.

Once again, this year, support from key funders has been instrumental in developing long-term projects to help with nature's recovery on land and at sea. As we journey forward, we are thrilled to know that our collective efforts are shaping a wilder future for both nature and people.

Garden Tour at Sir Bob Salisbury's



Holly Blue on Bluebell © Ronald Surgenor



Hughes Insurance sponsored the Let Nature In campaign



Members

Nature continues to be under threat, but our members have remained steadfast in their support of local conservation efforts. This year, income from member donations slightly exceeded our annual target, thanks to the generosity of existing members increasing their regular giving in response to our annual appeal for more financial support for our work and lower cancellation rates. Our half-price January sale successfully attracted new supporters, who will pay the full membership rate after the first year.

Member events and online winter talks continue to be popular, with steady attendance each year. In the coming year, we plan to create even more opportunities for members to get closer to nature and learn more about nature conservation through our events.

Legacy and In-Memory

Northern Ireland is blessed with many wonderful landscapes, but our precious wildlife and wild places are in trouble. Leaving a gift in your will or in memory of a loved one ensures we can continue to deliver positive outcomes for nature for years to come. Anyone who loves wildlife can make a unique impact by remembering Ulster Wildlife in their will, ensuring that the species and habitats we treasure are preserved for future generations to enjoy.

Family and friends of Maud Wilson, a long-standing and deeply committed member, honoured her memory by donating to Ulster Wildlife in lieu of flowers, raising much-needed funds for local nature conservation work. Additionally, a significant bequest was made by life member Valerie Cooper. Gifts in wills help purchase land, protect key species, and nurture future wildlife champions.

Businesses

Working with businesses can be mutually beneficial for both nature and the companies involved, fostering a partnership that supports nature's recovery while also enhancing corporate social responsibility and sustainability efforts.

Thanks to Hughes Insurance for sponsoring the 'Let Nature In' wildlife gardening campaign; Wilson Resources for supporting our blue carbon work and funding a one-year graduate marine conservation post; Power NI for providing financial support for peatland restoration work, volunteering on our natures reserves and raising awareness of peatlands; Giraffe Associates for funding specialist barn owl nest box cameras; Field Day Ireland and Ardbarron Trust for their generous annual donations. Several businesses also raised funds for Ulster Wildlife through the Benevity portal, which powers purpose-driven business initiatives.

Thank you to our supporters



Irish Hare © Simon Gray

Grey heron at Balloo Woodland © Ronald Surgenor



Funders

Statutory (government) funding and charitable trust funding help support some of our larger projects and areas of work and are essential funding streams for many charities. Thank you to our funding partners for providing financial support for several specific projects over the past year.

Thanks to Ards and North Down Borough Council, Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, Garfield Weston Foundation, Ministry of Defence, National Lottery Community Fund, National Lottery Heritage Fund and Department of Communities, RSWT and Swire Charitable Trust.

New Leaf Compost donation for Bog Meadows



Fundraising & Donations

While membership is our primary form of fundraising – enabling the charity to plan for future work through regular giving – we are incredibly grateful for all of the other donations we received during the year.

Donations include a heavy-duty refurbished laptop for the Nature Reserve Team from NI Trucks; peat-free compost for the new community wildlife garden at Bog Meadows Nature Reserve from Natural World Products; birthday gifts from supporters on Meta, and individuals like Irene Surgenor who availed of our donation envelopes in lieu of gifts for her birthday celebrations; donations for talks we delivered; and generous gifts from many supporters towards our work in general.



Plans for the Future

With the bold and ambitious goals outlined in our Strategy 2030, we have a significant task ahead to restore and reverse the decline of nature. This year, we have made substantial progress across all strategy areas, laying a strong foundation to achieve our vision of a thriving natural world. We aim to inspire everyone to participate in nature's recovery, ensuring nature plays a crucial role in addressing both the nature and climate emergencies.

Long-eared owl © Ronald Surgenor

Outcome 1: Nature is in recovery and wildlife is thriving across Northern Ireland

We will continue to advocate for, guide, and inform the development of a national 'Nature Recovery Network' for Northern Ireland – a strategic approach to creating more, bigger, better and joined-up spaces for wildlife to thrive.

At a more localised level, we will seek further opportunities to establish nature recovery zones around our nature reserves, creating extensive wildlife-friendly areas that connect with each other. In partnership with stakeholders, we will also implement specific actions to support the recovery of key species.

We will build upon our efforts to engage farmers and landowners in nature's recovery, and we will engage with the fishing industry to ensure our seas are well-managed for nature.

Outcome 2: More people are taking positive action for nature and climate and are benefitting from time spent in nature.

We will continue to support and empower people to become agents of change to help address the climate and nature emergencies while developing new and innovative ways to engage with more diverse audiences.

Young people and under-represented groups will remain at the forefront of our efforts, and we will create new opportunities to connect and empower them to campaign, take action as individuals and within their communities and drive political and behavioural change. This approach will be embedded in our forthcoming People Engagement Strategy.

Growing and strengthening our membership and supporter network is key to delivering on the ambition of our strategy and we will continue to focus our efforts on engaging and inspiring new members and supporters from every part of society.

Outcome 3: Nature-based solutions are playing a central role in addressing climate change

We will restore natural ecosystems at scale, expanding our peatland restoration work, develop new native oyster nurseries, and establish new partnership projects to deliver blue carbon habitat restoration such as seagrass. Together, these initiatives will provide long-term carbon sequestration and storage while also promoting diverse and resilient wildlife.

Financial Review at 31 March 2024

Ulster Wildlife’s financial position remained stable during the year and a modest surplus on unrestricted activities was achieved.

Sources of Income

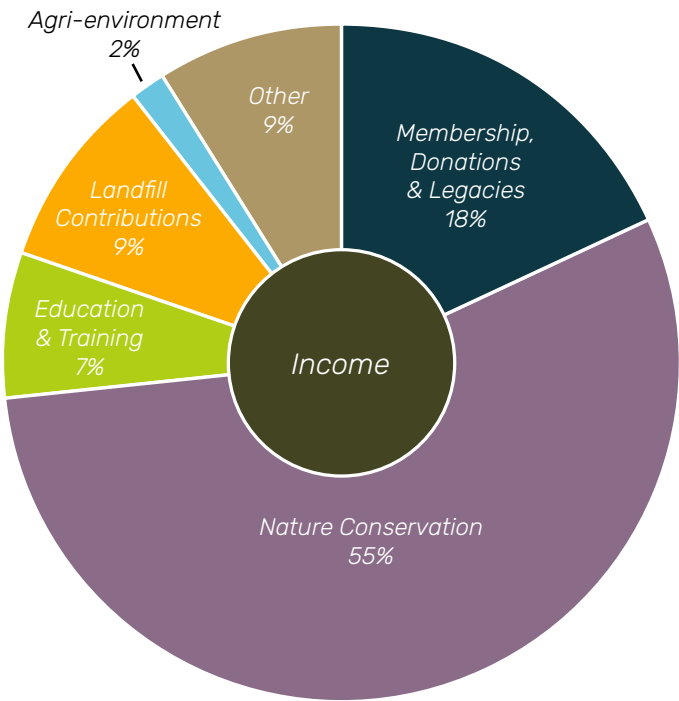
Unrestricted income is revenue generated by the charity for its general purposes. It can be used at the discretion of the charity on any of the charity’s objects and a substantial component is donations from our members and supporters.

Unrestricted income is 15% higher than the previous year (+£101k). The main contributing factor was an increase in donations and legacies (+£89k).

Restricted income is income given to the charity for specific purposes. It may be a grant for a specific piece of conservation work or education activity or funds to be awarded as grants to third parties, in line with specific grant

guidelines. Restricted income remained at a similar level to the previous year with a small decrease of 3% (–£84k).

Ulster Wildlife’s restricted income has two main components, grants for specific conservation and education activity which is delivered by the charity; and Landfill Communities Funds where grants are awarded by the charity to third parties for purposes defined under the Landfill Communities Fund guidelines. Detail of the funders which contribute to our restricted projects and other sources of restricted income is outlined in Notes 4 – 8 of the Financial Statements.



Income	Unrestricted Funds £'000	Restricted Funds £'000	Total Funds £'000	Ratio
Membership, Donations & Legacies	541	54	595	18%
Nature Conservation	-	1,794	1,794	55%
Agri-environment payments	47	6	53	2%
Landfill Tax Contributions	-	299	299	9%
Environmental Education & Training	-	230	230	7%
Other Income	175	110	285	9%
Total Income	763	2,493	3,256	100%

Financial Review at 31 March 2024

How the Charity Spent its Resources

Overall expenditure was 6% lower in the year to 31 March 2024 than in the previous year (–£174k).

In line with the income split, a large part of the expenditure is on conservation and education activity.

Restricted projects make a contribution to core overhead costs for time and expenses incurred in running the projects.

After taking this contribution into account an unrestricted surplus of £57k was generated.

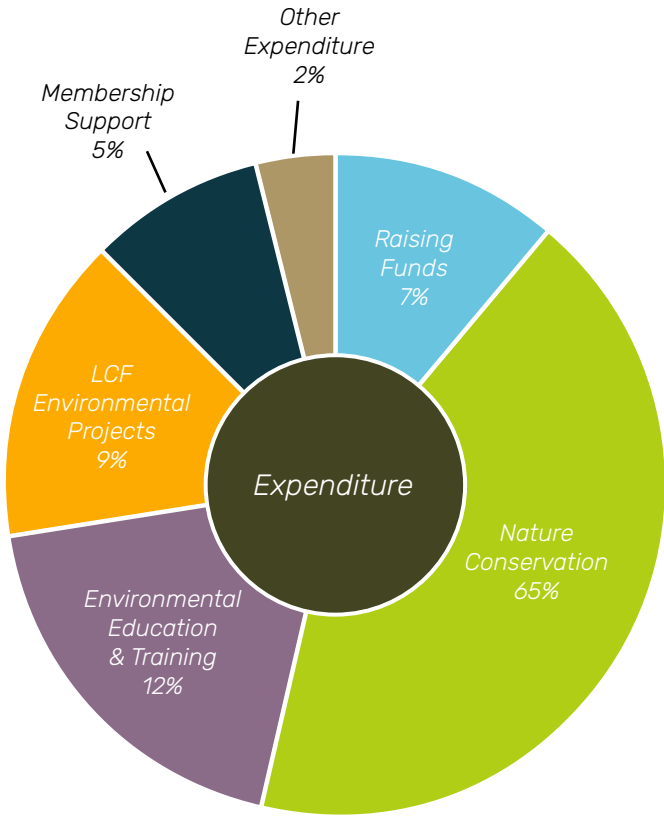
The surplus is in keeping with the charity’s objectives which are to deliver conservation outcomes rather than a surplus of income over expenditure. A modest surplus is, however, necessary in order to maintain financial stability and help to secure the long-term viability of the charity.

After expenditure on restricted projects, the ‘surplus’ on restricted funds amounted to £653k.

This ‘surplus’ represents income received relating to projects in the year to 31 March 2024 where expenditure was incurred in prior years and was in line with expectations. It also includes £250k received in the year to assist with cash flow in large scale funded projects for conservation works. When these project works are complete Ulster Wildlife can use these funds to invest in land for peatland restoration.

£73k of the surplus relates to income received for the purchase of capital equipment including where the expenditure has been capitalised on the balance sheet.

Restricted financial reserves cannot be utilised by the charity, except for the very specific purposes set out by the funder. These financial reserves are therefore not available to fund either general working capital requirements or any unexpected events.



Expenditure	Total Funds £'000	Ratio
Raising Funds	172	7%
Nature Conservation	1,657	65%
Environmental Education & Training	291	12%
LCF Environmental Projects	231	9%
Membership Support	130	5%
Other Expenditure	59	2%
Total Expenditure	2,540	100%

Organisational support costs of £364k (Notes 10 & 11) have been allocated across the activities above on a proportional basis representing the resources expended to run all aspects of the charity.

Structure, Governance & Management

Ulster Wildlife Trust, (operating as Ulster Wildlife) is registered with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland (NIC101848) and is a not-for-profit company incorporated in Northern Ireland, limited by guarantee (NI 12711). It is an independent body, locally governed, affiliated to The Wildlife Trusts, a federated network of 46 charities across the UK.

The charity is governed by a Board of Trustees (Council) comprised of up to 17 members who serve up to a nine-year term. The Ulster Wildlife Council is responsible for making strategic decisions in relation to policy and procedure within Ulster Wildlife, while day-to-day operational decisions and management is delegated to the Chief Executive, who in turn oversees the staff team of Ulster Wildlife of which there were 45 at the end of March 2024.

All Board Members receive induction training in relation to their role, are provided with a Governance Handbook when they are appointed and adhere to the Code of Good Governance.

Ulster Wildlife also has an Honorary President, Joe Furphy, who does not have a voting or decision-making role on the Board but contributes to discussions and carries out representation for the Charity.

Details of serving Trustees during 2023/24 can be found below.

CHAIR



Ken Brundle
(Appointed on 17 September 2013, appointed Chairman 22 November 2017. Stood down on 30 September 2023)

CHAIR



John Witchell
(Appointed on 07 December 2017, appointed Chair 30 September 2023.)
F&A

VICE-CHAIR



Stephen Aston
(Appointed on 07 December 2017, appointed Vice Chairman on 27 September 2018)
F & A

VICE-CHAIR



David Sterling
(Appointed 16 October 2020, appointed Vice Chair 02 December 2021)
E, F & A

HONORARY TREASURER



David Hendron
(Appointed on 25 July 2018, appointed Treasurer on 27 September 2018)
F & A

COMPANY SECRETARY



Catherine Thompson
(Appointed on 14 March 2019, appointed Company Secretary on 18 March 2021)
G

COUNCIL MEMBER



Anna Barclay
(Appointed 24 November 2020)
G

COUNCIL MEMBER



Joe Breen
(Appointed 9 June 2022. Passed away June 2024)
E

COUNCIL MEMBER



Bob Brown
(Appointed 16 October 2020)
E

COUNCIL MEMBER



Richard Buchanan
(Co-opted 31 Oct 2023)
F

COUNCIL MEMBER



Chloe Craig
(Co-opted 30 Nov 2023)
E

COUNCIL MEMBER



Fiona Davey
(Appointed on 19 November 2015)
G

COUNCIL MEMBER



Ciarán Ferrin
(Co-opted 30 Nov 2023)
G

COUNCIL MEMBER



Seamus McKee
(Appointed 18 March 2021)
F

COUNCIL MEMBER



Stephen Smith
(Appointed 24 November 2020 Resigned 19 March 2024.)
F

COUNCIL MEMBER



Helen Surgenor
(Appointed 24 November 2020 Resigned 30 Sept 23)
F

COUNCIL MEMBER



Ed Wright
(Appointed on 07 October 2015)
F

HONORARY PRESIDENT



Joe Furphy



Marsh fritillary © Simon Gray



Cormorant © Ronald Surgenor



Frogs © Ronald Surgenor

Changes to the Council during 2023/2024

Helen Surgenor resigned on 30 September 2023 alongside Stephen Smith on 19 March 2024. Ken Brundle stood down as Chair on 30 September 2023 having served on the Council since 2013 and as Chair since 2017. Ken brought a wealth of experience and expertise, and his contribution has been invaluable. John Witchell was appointed as new Chair. Richard Buchanan was coopted on 31 October 2023.

As part of our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion two youth Council members, Chloe Craig and Ciarán Ferrin, were coopted on 30 November 2023.

The governance sub-structure comprises of four sub-committees: Governance, Finance & Audit, Environment and Fundraising. This governance framework is designed to ensure that we are an accountable, effective and efficient charity and to manage risk at the required level.

1. The Governance Committee (G) ensures that the Ulster Wildlife Council fulfils its legal, ethical and functional responsibilities through adequate governance policy development, skills audits, recruitment strategies for Council Members, training programmes, monitoring of Council activities and evaluation of Council's performance, human resources and health & safety management.

2. The Finance & Audit Committee (F&A) supports Council in ensuring that the effective governance of Ulster Wildlife is maintained in relation to: Financial and Physical Resources.

3. The Environment Committee (E) provides ongoing strategic input into the organisation's work linked to nature recovery and community action. The remit of this Committee encompasses nature reserves, environmental projects linked to habitats and/or species, and input into regional policy issues.

4. The Fundraising Committee (F) provides ongoing strategic input to the organisation's fundraising activities - with a focus on unrestricted fundraising.

Statement of Trustees' Responsibilities

The Trustees (who are also the Directors of Ulster Wildlife Trust) are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Annual Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and regulations.

Company and charity law requires the Directors to prepare financial statements for each financial year, which give a true and fair view of the state of the affairs of the charitable company and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the Directors are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently,
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities Statement of Recommended Practice,
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent,
- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements,
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charitable company will continue in operation.

The Trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the charity's transactions and disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and to enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Charities

Act 2008. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Provision of Information to Auditors

Each of the individuals who is a Trustee at the date of approval of this report confirms that:

- so far as they are aware, there is no relevant audit information of which the charity's auditor is unaware; and
- they have taken all the steps that they ought to have taken to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the charity's auditors are aware of that information.

Auditor

DNTCA Limited are deemed to be re-appointed under section 487(2) of the Companies Act 2006. This report was approved by the Board on 29 August 2024 and signed on its behalf by

John Witchell
Chairman

David Hendron
Honorary Treasurer



Articles of Association

Ulster Wildlife's charitable objectives as set out in our Articles of Association are:

(1) The advancement of environmental protection and improvement, in particular the conservation of all aspects of Northern Ireland and its adjacent areas' wildlife, biodiversity, geodiversity and associated natural beauty for the benefit of present and future generations by:

(a) safeguarding, maintaining and enhancing natural biodiversity and geodiversity through the management of nature reserves (however entitled or however established);

(b) practising, advocating, encouraging, influencing, advising and campaigning for best conservation practice involving land, sea and freshwater management practice in ways that favour biodiversity, geodiversity, ecosystem health, sustainable use of natural resources and sustainable development;

(c) undertaking action, independently or in partnership, to protect threatened habitats, sites of geodiversity or heritage significance, at local, national or international levels on or in water, land and adjacent seas;

(d) taking account of other aspects of the natural heritage on which wildlife is dependent or to which it contributes, including landforms and landscapes;

(e) improving the quality of life of people through supporting a biodiversity, ecosystem, geodiversity and sustainability led approach to the management and design of the natural and built environment.

(2) The advancement of education by raising the public's awareness and knowledge of all aspects of the natural and built heritage, biodiversity and geodiversity of Northern Ireland and its adjacent areas by promoting, undertaking and co-operating in research and gathering and sharing information on these topics.

(3) The advancement of citizenship through volunteering linked to natural heritage including the promotion of sustainable food production and sustainable lifestyles.

(4) The advancement of the arts, culture, heritage and science linked to natural heritage through events and project-based action.

(5) The advancement of health and well-being through activities linked to the natural environment.

Devils bit scabious © Ronald Surgenor

Key Policies & Processes

Managing Risk

Ulster Wildlife Trustees are responsible for overseeing risk management by the charity. They are responsible for ensuring that Ulster Wildlife has an effective system of internal control, management and audit to enable the charity to take advantage of opportunities whilst ensuring that the charity remains protected. Risk management is well established and is considered in every aspect of our work. We have an active risk management process in place to make sure that appropriate risk assessments are completed and controls are in place to manage and mitigate risk across the organisation.

The Board of Trustees and Senior Leadership Team work together to ensure that risk is very carefully assessed in relation to the health, welfare and safety of staff, volunteers and the public. As such, health & safety risk management is supported by an external consultant. Risks are also reviewed in the broadest sense and anything that might alter or impact on the charity's ability to fulfil its charitable objectives is considered.

Processes include:

- Risk assessments are completed by all staff to identify, evaluate and manage risks.
- Health & Safety management system including phone app is used to facilitate management and record key information.
- Risk register with mitigation actions is reviewed at least quarterly by the Board.
- Health & Safety is a key factor in selecting external contractors and Health & Safety obligations are included in awarded external contracts.
- Comprehensive risk management reviews are carried out once a year by all subcommittees and are reported to the Board Meeting.
- Multi-year planning, with targets that are linked to delivery of organisational strategy.
- 'Value for Money' principles guide when and where we source goods and services.
- Annual external audit.

The most significant risks identified in 2023/24 were:

- The cost of living crisis and its continued impact on fundraising.
- Impact of inflationary pressures on running costs.
- Staff retention and recruitment.
- Delays in agreement of funding due to lack of NI Executive in place.

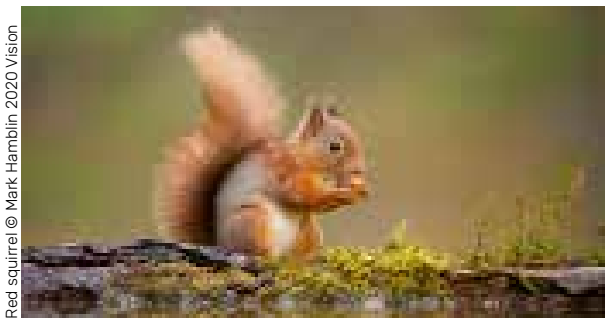
Cost of living crisis and inflationary increases were actively managed during the year. A membership growth plan and associated staffing structure has been put into place in an effort to return to membership growth over the coming years.

Staff turnover and recruitment was higher than usual during the year due to funding uncertainties and some projects ending, and others starting during the year. Government funding was agreed in summer 2023, with five-year agreements now in place through the DAERA Environment Fund. Staff retention will remain a key issue for the charity to manage moving forward.

The most significant risks identified for 2024/25 are:

- Staff retention and recruitment.
- Staffing gaps to be managed including recruitment of a new Chief Executive.
- Managing the influx of government policies and consultations due to the return of the NI Executive.

Red squirrel © Mark Hamblin 2020 Vision



Blue tit © Simon Gray

Equal Opportunities and Diversity

Ulster Wildlife aims to be an employer of choice, for people from different backgrounds, and through our Equality in the Workplace policy we promote respect for the individual and equality of opportunity.

Our aim is for our workforce to be truly representative of all sections of the wider community and for each employee to feel respected and able to give their best. Within Ulster Wildlife there is respect for promotion and protection of each individual's human rights. Ulster Wildlife promotes being at ease with all aspects of diversity, built on fairness and respect for all. Decisions about recruitment and selection, promotion, training or any other benefit are made objectively and without discrimination.

Our Equality in the Workplace policy helps all those who work for us to develop their full potential and ensure that the talents and resources of the workforce are utilised to fully maximise the efficiency of the organisation.

Sustainability

We have set a target to achieve net zero emissions by 2030 and we take sustainability very seriously. We have already commenced the net zero journey, which will be an integral part of our organisational and project planning. All electricity used is renewable and we have started phasing in EVs as budget allows. During the project development phase for new projects, carbon footprint and location of project staff is considered, as by the nature of our work, our activities are dispersed throughout Northern Ireland.

A priority for Northern Ireland in terms of the regional carbon budget is to restore damaged peatland and this is a significant delivery strand for the charity. We are also increasing our work in the area of 'blue carbon' habitat restoration.

Wider network

Ulster Wildlife is part of a collective of 46 Wildlife Trusts, represented nationally by The Royal Society for Wildlife Trusts (RSWT). The Wildlife Trusts collectively act together, where appropriate, in key policy areas and campaigns.

Financial Management

Financial Reserves Policy

The Trustees recognise there is a balance to be achieved between delivering our charitable objectives and managing the actual and potential risks of failing to meet our liabilities when they fall due. Consequently, the Trustees plan to hold a level of unrestricted financial reserves to provide the necessary resilience to manage these risks.

These risks include, amongst others:

- Loss of funding sources
- Funding delays
- Costs associated with unforeseen closure

The Trustees, having assessed the likelihood of these risks occurring, consider that an unrestricted financial reserve level (excluding designated funds) equal to six months unrestricted payroll and support costs and potential winding up costs should be targeted. This amounts to around £1m for the year to 31 March 2024 as permanent staff numbers have increased. The balance on unrestricted reserves as of 31 March 2024, net of unrestricted fixed assets is £741k which would cover potential winding up costs and 4 months of payroll for permanent positions and support costs.

Designated Funds

In addition to the above, the Trustees have designated certain unrestricted funds as the 'Fund for the Future'. This money is earmarked to help further the charity's strategic objectives, delivering long term strategic change and this includes the acquisition of new nature reserves.

Monitoring and Reviewing

Financial reserve levels are monitored on a quarterly basis throughout the year as a standing item on the Finance Committee's agenda. They also form a part of the financial information presented to the Board on a quarterly basis.

Our Promise to Our Supporters

At Ulster Wildlife our members, supporters and funders are at the heart of everything we do to help wildlife and wild places thrive. That is why, as a registered charity (NIC101848), we are part of the Fundraising Regulator's self-regulatory scheme.

As members of the scheme, we follow the Institute of Fundraising's Codes of Fundraising Practice and comply with the key principles embodied in the Codes. This means when supporters make a donation to us they can be assured that our fundraising is legal, open, honest and respectful.

Our Fundraising Promise



We are committed to high standards.

- We do all we can to ensure that staff, fundraisers, volunteers and fundraising contractors working with us to raise funds comply with the Code and with this Promise.
- We comply with the law including those that apply to data protection, health and safety and the environment.

We are honest and open.

- We tell the truth and do not exaggerate; we do what we say we are going to do.
- We answer all reasonable questions about our fundraising activities and costs.
- We are clear about who we are, what we do and how donations are used.
- Where we have a promotional agreement with a commercial company, we make clear how much of the purchase price we receive.
- We give a clear explanation of how a donation can be made and how to amend a regular commitment.

We are respectful.

- We respect the rights, dignities and privacy of our supporters and beneficiaries.
- We will not put undue pressure on anyone to make a gift, and if a person does not want to give or wishes to cease giving, we will respect that decision.
- If someone tells us that they don't want us to contact them in a particular way, we will not do so – our Privacy Notice for Members and Supporters is available on our website at ulsterwildlife.org/privacy-notice

We are accountable.

- If anyone is unhappy with anything we have done whilst fundraising, they can contact us to make a complaint at complaints@ulsterwildlife.org. For further information, read our complaints policy.
- If we cannot resolve a complaint, we accept the authority of the Fundraising Regulator to make a final adjudication.



Redshank © Simon Gray

Advisors, Senior Personnel and Administrative Details

Auditors	DNT Chartered Accountants Ormeau House 91-97 Ormeau Road Belfast BT7 1SH
Bankers	Danske Bank Belfast Finance Centre PO Box 183 Donegall Square West Belfast BT1 6JS
Solicitors	Edwards & Co., 28 Hill Street, Belfast BT1 2LA
Company Secretary	Catherine Thompson
Senior Leadership Team	Jennifer Fulton - Chief Executive Officer Dawn Miskelly - Director of Development and Governance Peter McEvoy - Director of Land Management
Charity Registration Number	NIC 101848
Company Registration Number	NI12711
Registered Office and Operational Address	McClelland House 10 Heron Road Belfast BT3 9LE

Independent Auditors' Report to the Members of the Ulster Wildlife Trust

Opinion

We have audited the charity financial statements of Ulster Wildlife Trust ('the charity') for the financial year ended 31 March 2024 which comprise the Statement of Financial Activities (incorporating an Income and Expenditure Account), the Balance Sheet, the Statement of Cash Flows and notes to the financial statements, including the summary of significant accounting policies set out in note 2. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including FRS 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland" and Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with FRS 102.

In our opinion when reporting in accordance with a fair presentation framework the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the charity's affairs as at 31 March 2024 and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice;
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the charity in accordance with ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled

our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the charity's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from the date when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the trustees with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

Other information

The other information comprises the information included in the annual report other than the financial statements and our Auditor's Report thereon. The trustees are responsible for the other information contained within the annual report. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

Our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the course of the audit, or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether this gives rise to a material

misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact. We have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinion on other matter prescribed by the Companies Act 2006

In our opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit:

- the information given in the Trustees Annual Report for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements; and
- the Trustees Annual Report has been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

In the light of the knowledge and understanding of the charity and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified material misstatements in the Trustees Annual Report.

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the Companies Act 2006 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept; or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- certain disclosures of trustees' remuneration specified by law are not made.

Independent Auditors' Report to the Members of the Ulster Wildlife Trust

Responsibilities of trustees for the financial statements

As explained more fully in the Statement of Trustees' Responsibilities, the trustees are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as they determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the trustees are responsible for assessing the charity's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless management either intends to liquidate the charity or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an Auditor's Report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We design procedures in line with our responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of irregularities, including fraud. The extent to which our procedures are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud is detailed below:

Our approach to identifying and assessing the risks of material misstatement in respect of irregularities, including fraud and non compliance with laws and regulations, was as follows:

- The engagement partner ensured that the engagement team collectively had the appropriate competence, capabilities and skills to identify or recognise non-compliance with applicable laws and regulations;
- We identified the laws and regulations applicable to the company through discussions with directors and other management,
- We focused on specific laws and regulations which we considered may have a direct material effect on the financial statements or the operations of the company,

To address the risk of fraud through management bias and override of controls, we:

- Performed analytical procedures to identify any unusual or unexpected relationships;
- Investigated the rationale behind significant or unusual transactions;
- Tested journal entries to identify unusual transactions;
- Assessed whether judgements and assumptions made in determining the accounting estimates were indicative of potential bias.

In response to the risk of irregularities and non-compliance with laws and regulations, we designed procedures which included, but were not limited to:

- Agreeing financial statement disclosures to underlying supporting documentation;

Irish Moiled Cattle © Ronald Surgenor

Independent Auditors' Report to the Members of the Ulster Wildlife Trust

- Reading the minutes of meetings of those charged with governance;
- Enquiring of management as to actual and potential litigation and claims;
- Reviewing correspondence with HMRC, Companies House and the company's legal advisors.

There are inherent limitations in our audit procedures described above. The more removed that laws and regulations are from financial transactions, the less likely it is that we would become aware of non-compliance. Auditing standards also limit the audit procedures required to identify non-compliance with laws and regulations to enquiry of the directors and other management and the inspection of regulatory and legal correspondence, if any.

Material misstatements that arise due to fraud can be harder to detect than those that arise from error as they may involve deliberate concealment or collusion.

A further description of our responsibilities is available on the Financial Reporting Council's website at: www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of our auditor's report.

Further information regarding the scope of our responsibilities as auditor

As part of an audit in accordance with ISAs (UK), we exercise professional judgement and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting

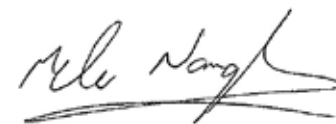
from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.

- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the charity's internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by trustees.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of the trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the charity's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our Auditor's Report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our Auditor's Report. However, future events or conditions may cause the charity to cease to continue as a going concern.
- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

The purpose of our audit work and to whom we owe our responsibilities

This report is made solely to the charity's members, as a body, in accordance with Chapter 3 of Part 16 of the Companies Act 2006. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charity's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charity and the charity's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.



Mr M Nangle (Senior Statutory Auditor) for and on behalf of **DNTCA Limited, Ormeau House, 91-97 Ormeau Road, Belfast, BT7 1SH.**

Statement of Financial Activities (including income and expenditure account) for the year ended 31 March 2024

	Notes	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	2024 Total Funds £	2023 Total Funds £
INCOME FROM:					
Donations & Legacies	3	541,576	53,689	595,265	525,356
Conservation Activities	4	-	1,793,700	1,793,700	1,918,730
Agri-environment Payments		46,625	6,596	53,221	28,242
Charitable Activities - Landfill Contributions	5	-	299,134	299,134	227,085
Education & Training Activities	6	-	230,002	230,002	313,655
Interest Received	7	17,949	7,935	25,884	6,872
Other Income	8	156,763	101,718	258,481	218,698
TOTAL INCOME		762,913	2,492,774	3,255,687	3,238,638
EXPENDITURE ON					
Raising Funds	9	144,790	-	144,790	80,453
Charitable Activities	10	706,227	1,688,756	2,394,983	2,633,739
TOTAL EXPENDITURE		851,017	1,688,756	2,539,773	2,714,192
NET INCOME BEFORE TRANSFERS AND FOREIGN EXCHANGE					
		(88,104)	804,018	715,914	524,446
Gains/(losses) from Foreign Exchange		(6,368)	68	(6,300)	(871)
Transfers Between Funds	14	151,567	(151,567)	-	-
NET MOVEMENT IN FUNDS		57,095	652,519	709,614	523,575
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS:					
Total Funds at 1 April 2023		1,198,737	1,989,544	3,188,281	2,664,706
Transfer (from)/to Designated Fund for the Future		-	-	-	-
TOTAL FUNDS AT 31 MARCH 2024		1,255,832	2,642,063	3,897,895	3,188,281

The notes on pages 40 to 43 form part of these financial statements.
The Statement of financial activities includes all gains and losses in the year.
All income and expenditure derives from continuing activities.

Statement of Financial Position at 31 March 2024

	Notes	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	2024 Total Funds £	2023 Total Funds £
FIXED ASSETS					
Tangible Assets	16	305,652	1,552,563	1,858,215	1,826,741
CURRENT ASSETS					
Debtors	17	296,919	238,726	535,645	226,806
Cash at Bank and in Hand		869,305	1,311,472	2,180,777	2,076,888
		1,166,224	1,550,198	2,716,422	2,303,694
CURRENT LIABILITIES					
Creditors	18	208,608	117,882	326,490	591,231
NET CURRENT ASSETS		957,616	1,432,316	2,389,932	1,712,463
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES		1,263,268	2,984,879	4,248,147	3,539,204
CREDITORS due in more than 1 year					
Capital Grants	19	7,436	342,816	350,252	350,923
		1,255,832	2,642,063	3,897,895	3,188,281
FINANCIAL RESERVES					
General Fund	20	1,046,346	-	1,046,346	989,251
Fund for the Future	22	209,486	-	209,486	209,486
Restricted Funds	21	-	2,642,063	2,642,063	1,989,544
		1,255,832	2,642,063	3,897,895	3,188,281

These financial statements were approved and signed by the members of the Board and authorised for issue on 29th August 2024



John Witchell, Chair



David Hendron, Honorary Treasurer

The notes on pages 41 to 44 form part of these financial statements.
Company Registration Number: NI 12711

Statement of Cash Flows for year ending 31 March 2024

	2024	2023
	£	£
Cash Flows from operating activities		
Net Income/(Expenditure)	715,914	524,446
<i>Adjustments for</i>		
Depreciation of Tangible Fixed Assets	41,152	25,982
Increase/(Decrease) in Deferred Capital Grant	(671)	(1,006)
(Increase)/Decrease in Trade and Other Debtors	(308,839)	491,109
Increase/(Decrease) in Trade and Other Creditors	(264,741)	(483,320)
Net Cash (used in)/from Operating Activities	182,815	557,211
Cash Flows from Investing Activities		
Purchase of Tangible Assets	(72,626)	(187,508)
Disposal of Tangible Assets	-	4,796
Net Cash used in Investing Activities	(72,626)	(182,712)
Net Increase/(Decrease) in Cash and Cash Equivalents	110,189	374,499
Cash and Cash Equivalents at Beginning of the Year	2,076,888	1,703,260
Net Increase/(Decrease) in Cash and Cash Equivalents due to Exchange Rate Movements	(6,300)	(871)
Cash and Cash Equivalents at End of the Year	2,180,777	2,076,888

Notes to the accounts

1 Statement of Compliance

These financial statements have been prepared in compliance with FRS102, 'The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and the Republic of Ireland', 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 (Charities SORP (FRS102)) and the Charities Act 2008.

2 Accounting Policies

Basis of preparation

The financial statements have been prepared on the historical cost basis, as modified by the revaluation of certain financial assets and liabilities measured at fair value through income or expenditure.

The financial statements are prepared in sterling, which is the functional currency of the entity.

Going concern

There are no material uncertainties about the charity's ability to continue.

Fund accounting

Unrestricted funds are available for use, at the discretion of the trustees, to further any of the charity's purposes.

Restricted funds are subject to restrictions on their expenditure declared by the donor or funder or through the terms of an appeal.

Incoming resources

All incoming resources are included in the statement of financial activities when entitlement has passed to the charity; it is probable that the economic benefits associated with the transaction will flow to the charity and the amount can be reliably measured. The following specific policies are applied to particular categories of income:

- income from donations or grants is recognised when there is evidence of entitlement to the gift, receipt is probable and its amount can be measured reliably.
- legacy income is recognised when receipt is probable and entitlement is established.
- income from contracts for the supply of services is recognised with the delivery of the contracted service.

These are classified as unrestricted funds unless there is a contractual requirement for it to be spent on a particular purpose and returned if unspent, in which case it is regarded as restricted.

Resources expended

Expenditure is recognised on an accruals basis as a liability is incurred. Expenditure is classified under headings of the statement of financial activities to which it relates:

- expenditure on raising funds includes the costs of all fundraising activities.

- expenditure on charitable activities includes all costs incurred by the charity in undertaking activities that further its charitable aims for the benefit of its beneficiaries, including those support costs and costs relating to the governance of the charity.

All costs are allocated to expenditure categories reflecting the use of the resource. Direct costs attributable to a single activity are allocated directly to that activity. Shared costs are apportioned between the activities they contribute to on a reasonable, justifiable and consistent basis.

Depreciation

Purchased assets, which individually exceed £5000 at cost are included in the balance sheet at historic cost less depreciation and any impairment in accordance with FRS 102.

Fixed Assets are depreciated over the period of their useful lives as follows:

Land	not depreciated
Buildings	2.5% straight line
Equipment	10% straight line
Computers	25% straight line
Vehicles - cars and vans	15% straight line

Depreciation for specialist conservation equipment with limited resale value would normally be depreciated over the lifetime of the project in which they are used.

Grants

Government and other grants are recognised at the fair value of the asset received or receivable. Grants are not recognised until there is reasonable assurance that the charity will comply with the conditions attaching to them and the grants will be received.

Foreign currency

Transactions in foreign currencies are translated at rates prevailing at the date of the transaction.

Pensions

Ulster Wildlife operates a defined contribution pension scheme and matches employee contributions to the scheme at a maximum rate of 9% of salary.

Taxation

The organisation is a registered charity with HMRC and is therefore not liable for taxation to the extent that any surplus or gains arising are wholly applied to its charitable objects.

The company is registered for VAT. Much of the income is either exempt or outside the scope of VAT.

Consequently, it is not possible to recover most of the VAT incurred on expenditure. Income and expenditure are shown exclusive of recoverable VAT.

Notes to the accounts

3 Donations & Legacies

	Unrestricted Funds 2024 £	Restricted Funds 2024 £	Unrestricted Funds 2023 £	Restricted Funds 2023 £
Legacy & In Memory Giving	97,926	-	3,320	-
Membership Contributions inc. Gift Aid	428,802	-	416,757	-
Corporate Support	6,824	42,225	26,491	58,500
Other Gifts & Donations	8,024	11,464	6,141	14,147
	541,576	53,689	452,709	72,647

4 Conservation Grants

	Unrestricted Funds 2024 £	Restricted Funds 2024 £	Unrestricted Funds 2023 £	Restricted Funds 2023 £
DAERA Environment Fund	-	946,401	-	1,092,606
DAERA Maritime and Fisheries Fund	-	4,953	-	47,625
Department for Infrastructure Living Places and Spaces Fund	-	-	-	10,000
Environmental Farming Scheme	-	218,269	-	231,641
Esmée Fairbairn Foundation	-	128,919	-	103,250
EU- Interreg VA	-	211,516	-	247,531
Garfield Weston Foundation	-	-	-	30,000
Kreitman Foundation	-	-	-	11,600
Landfill Communities Fund	-	10,450	-	2,167
Marine Institute	-	2,507	-	1,623
Ministry of Defence	-	20,685	-	14,249
National Lottery Heritage Fund	-	-	-	116,438
Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts	-	200,000	-	10,000
Swire Charitable Trust	-	50,000	-	-
	-	1,793,700	-	1,918,730

5 Landfill Environmental Projects

	Unrestricted Funds 2024 £	Restricted Funds 2024 £	Unrestricted Funds 2023 £	Restricted Funds 2023 £
Landfill Contributions Received	-	299,134	-	227,085
	-	299,134	-	227,085
<u>Expenditure</u>				
Entrust Administration Fee	-	10,111	-	8,084
Direct Project Expenditure	-	194,251	-	276,178
Direct Costs	26,288	-	20,166	-
	26,288	204,362	20,166	284,262

Notes to the accounts

6 Education & Training Grants

	Unrestricted Funds 2024 £	Restricted Funds 2024 £	Unrestricted Funds 2023 £	Restricted Funds 2023 £
Department for Communities (Job Start Scheme)	-	-	-	60,471
Department for Communities (Covid Recovery Employment and Skills Initiative for Heritage)	-	35,399	-	44,249
Education Authority	-	(2,688)	-	7,445
European Solidarity Corps	-	-	-	13,201
National Lottery Community Fund (Our Environment, Our Future)	-	-	-	22,768
National Lottery Community Fund (People & Communities)	-	60,520	-	74,761
National Lottery Community Fund (Empowering Young People 3)	-	60,863	-	61,282
National Lottery Heritage Fund (NextDoor Nature)	-	45,172	-	29,478
National Lottery Heritage Fund (New to Nature)	-	29,737	-	-
Belfast City Council	-	999	-	-
	-	230,002	-	313,655

7 Interest Received

Interest received in Restricted Funds is the interest earned on landfill tax receipts held prior to disbursement, and interest received which is used to fund expenditure on nature reserves. Interest received in unrestricted funds is bank interest earned on other cash balances.

8 Other Income

	Unrestricted Funds 2024 £	Restricted Funds 2024 £	Unrestricted Funds 2023 £	Restricted Funds 2023 £
Esmée Fairbairn Foundation Core Funding	75,000	-	110,000	-
Consultancy	28,786	-	20,198	-
Sundry income	52,977	101,718	46,620	41,880
	156,763	101,718	176,818	41,880

9 Expenditure on Raising Donations & Legacies

	Unrestricted Funds 2024 £	Restricted Funds 2024 £	Unrestricted Funds 2023 £	Restricted Funds 2023 £
Travel	5	-	62	-
Professional Fees	-	-	92	-
Printed Materials, Misc	17,516	-	14,338	-
Wages & Salary Costs*	127,269	-	65,961	-
	144,790	-	80,453	-

* Increase in salary costs related to planned restructure in the membership team to grow income in future years.

Notes to the accounts

10 Charitable Activities

	Unrestricted Funds 2024 £	Restricted Funds 2024 £	Total Funds 2024 £	Total Funds 2023 £
Landfill Environmental Projects	26,288	204,362	230,650	304,429
Nature Conservation	177,186	1,218,861	1,396,047	1,582,924
Environmental Education & Training	72,222	172,776	244,998	231,842
Membership Support Costs	109,578	-	109,578	106,115
Organisation Support Costs	295,371	68,436	363,807	369,663
Depreciation	16,161	24,321	40,482	29,773
Bank Interest & Charges	5,085	-	5,085	5,109
Auditors Remuneration	4,336	-	4,336	4,725
(Profit)/Loss on Disposal of Fixed Asset	-	-	-	(841)
	706,227	1,688,756	2,394,983	2,633,739

11 Expenditure on Charitable Activities

	Staff Costs £	Other direct costs £	2024 £	2023 £
Landfill Environmental Projects	22,370	208,280	230,650	304,428
Nature Conservation	779,733	616,314	1,396,047	1,582,924
Environmental Education	214,924	30,074	244,998	231,843
Membership Support Costs	47,963	61,616	109,579	106,115
Organisation Support Costs	224,837	138,969	363,806	369,663
Other- Depreciation, Bank Charges, Audit.	-	49,903	49,903	38,766
	1,289,827	1,105,156	2,394,983	2,633,739

Other Direct costs Environmental Projects	Landfill Environmental Projects £	Nature Conservation Projects £	Environmental Education Projects £	Membership & Organisation Support Costs £	Total £
Direct Project Costs	204,362	140,051	15,851	20,634	380,898
Premises Costs	3,853	32,395	1,792	47,546	85,586
Postage, Printing & Stationery	-	4,615	197	47,698	52,510
Staff Travel and Vehicle Costs	65	54,413	1,785	15,813	72,076
Contracted Services	-	341,488	6,079	26,775	374,342
Staff Training	-	13,883	3,831	1,701	19,415
Council Costs	-	-	-	5,947	5,947
Information Technology	-	29,469	539	34,471	64,479
	208,280	616,314	30,074	200,585	1,055,253

Notes to the accounts

12 Depreciation

	Unrestricted Funds 2024 £	Restricted Funds 2024 £	Unrestricted Funds 2023 £	Restricted Funds 2023 £
Motor Vehicles	2,157	15,629	3,499	12,270
Equipment	5,759	8,692	5,759	-
Buildings	8,245	-	8,245	-
	16,161	24,321	17,503	12,270

13 Staff Costs

	2024 £	2023 £
Salaries and Wages	1,220,458	1,044,198
Social Security Costs	109,549	93,964
Pension Contributions	87,090	64,617
	1,417,097	1,202,779

One employee received emoluments of more than £60,000. The average number of employees during the year, calculated on the basis of full time equivalents, was 37.9 (2023- 33.6).

The key management personnel comprise the trustees and the members of the senior management team.

The total employee benefits of the key management personnel was £202,497. (2023: £287,960).

14 Transfer Between Funds

	2024 £	2023 £
Landfill Fund Administration Costs	26,288	20,166
Project Contribution to Organisation Support Costs	134,439	213,101
Match Funding for DAERA Funding	(9,160)	(10,005)
	151,567	223,262

15 Board Remuneration and Related Party Transactions

No members of the Board received any remuneration during the year in their capacity as Trustees.

No travel and subsistence costs were paid on behalf of trustees during the year. (2023 £NIL).

No travel and subsistence costs were paid to trustees during the year. (2023 £NIL).

No trustees received payment for professional services supplied to the charity (2023 £NIL).

No balances are owed to trustees at 31st March 2024.

Notes to the accounts

16 Fixed Assets

	Nature Reserves £	Land & Buildings £	Motor Vehicles £	Equipment & Computers £	TOTAL £
COST OR VALUATION					
At 1 April 2023	1,240,158	589,355	171,863	158,795	2,160,171
Additions	-	-	49,538	23,088	72,626
Disposals	-	-	-	-	-
At 31 March 2024	1,240,158	589,355	221,401	181,883	2,232,797
DEPRECIATION					
At 1 April 2023	-	173,530	100,387	59,513	333,430
Charge for year	-	8,245	18,457	14,450	41,152
Disposals	-	-	-	-	-
At 31 March 2024	-	181,775	118,844	73,963	374,582
NBV at 31 March 2024	1,240,158	407,580	102,557	107,920	1,858,215
including restricted assets of	1,200,158	150,000	101,092	101,313	1,552,563

Glendun farm has been included at probate value of £150,000.

17 Debtors

	Unrestricted Funds 2024 £	Restricted Funds 2024 £	Unrestricted Funds 2023 £	Restricted Funds 2023 £
Debtors and Prepayments	142,650	155,070	85,958	73,530
Grants	135,227	83,656	-	48,342
Tax Refunds Due	19,042	-	18,976	-
	296,919	238,726	104,934	121,872

18 Creditors Falling Due Within One Year

	Unrestricted Funds 2024 £	Restricted Funds 2024 £	Unrestricted Funds 2023 £	Restricted Funds 2023 £
Sundry Creditors and Accrued Expenditure	208,608	117,882	151,549	439,682

19 Creditors Falling Due After More Than One Year

	Unrestricted Funds 2024 £	Restricted Funds 2024 £	Unrestricted Funds 2023 £	Restricted Funds 2023 £
Capital Grants	7,436	342,816	8,107	342,816

Notes to the accounts

20 Movement on Unrestricted Funds

	Unrestricted Funds 2024 £	Unrestricted Funds 2023 £
Opening Balance	989,251	988,414
Surplus for the Year	57,095	23,158
Transfer to Fund for the Future	-	(22,321)
Closing Balance	1,046,346	989,251

21 Movement on Restricted Funds

	Restricted Funds 2024 £	Restricted Funds 2023 £
Opening Balance	1,989,544	1,485,935
Net Income/([Expenditure) for the year	652,519	500,417
Transfer from/(to) Fund for the Future	-	3,192
Closing Balance	2,642,063	1,989,544

Some funders pay in advance and other funders issue payment only after the expenditure has been incurred. The movement on restricted funds in any year is a result of timing differences between receipts of grants for restricted projects and the related expenditure.

22 Movement on Fund for the Future

	Designated Fund for the Funds 2024 £	Designated Fund for the Funds 2023 £
Opening Balance	209,486	190,357
Transfer from Donations and Legacies	-	22,321
UW Contribution to the Purchase of Land	-	(3,192)
Closing Balance	209,486	209,486

Fund for the Future includes monies from gifts in wills and legacy donations and other donations, including restricted donations. It will be used to purchase and manage nature reserves, protect key species as well as educate and support future wildlife champions.

23 Contingent Liability

A portion of grants received may become repayable if the charity fails to comply with the terms of the relevant letters of offer.

24 Taxation

As a charity, Ulster Wildlife Trust is exempt from tax on income and gains to the extent that these are applied to its charitable objects. Ulster Wildlife is registered for VAT in relation to some specific taxable supplies. The net amount payable on taxable supplies was £17,525 in the period (2023 £13,496).

25 Company Status

Ulster Wildlife Trust Limited is a private company limited by guarantee and consequently does not have share capital. Each of the members is liable to contribute an amount not exceeding £1 towards the assets of the company in the event of liquidation.



Welcoming new barn owl chicks at David Sandford's farm in Co. Down



Ulster Wildlife is Northern Ireland's largest local nature conservation charity. We are working to bring nature back across Northern Ireland and secure a wilder future where people and nature are thriving together.

Join now and together we can make a real difference
www.ulsterwildlife.org/join

Get in touch

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- 📷 instagram.com/ulsterwildlife
- 🌐 linkedin.com/company/ulster-wildlife

We are proud to be one of **46 independent Wildlife Trusts** working across the UK

part of



Ulster Wildlife Trust, (operating as Ulster Wildlife) is registered with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland NIC101848 and is a not-for-profit company incorporated in Northern Ireland, limited by guarantee NI 12711.

Accounts

Our Year for Nature, People and Climate

Ulster Wildlife Trust

**Annual Report &
Accounts 22-23**



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Foreword

During 2022-23, as a charity, we have overcome great challenges to produce extremely positive results for nature, people and climate.

With the introduction of our bold new strategy to 2030 to tackle the nature and climate crises and meet local, regional and international targets, our top priority has been to explore new and innovative ways to scale up our work for nature's recovery, taking a lead from international best practice and research. From launching our second native oyster nursery at Glenarm and purchasing a peatland restoration demonstration site in Co. Tyrone to securing long-term funding from DAERA to scale up peatland restoration in Northern Ireland – we have started to lay the groundwork for achieving our ambition. This work also allows us to showcase, educate and collaborate on the benefits of nature-based solutions and the role our natural habitats can play in addressing climate change, and benefitting people's health and wellbeing.

Our work to bring wildlife back gained momentum as we celebrated a successful breeding year for our most iconic farmland bird the barn owl, played a role in introducing red squirrels to Castle Ward Estate, and conducted research showing the phenomenal expansion of pine martens across Northern Ireland. These 'good news' stories received widespread media coverage and captured people's hearts and minds, helping to raise our profile and grow our supporter base – more essential than ever if we are to make a real difference.

Despite another turbulent year for politics, our campaigning and advocacy work witnessed several notable successes including the historic passing of Northern Ireland's Climate Change Act, thanks to campaigning by our supporters and fellow environmental charities. We also responded to a procession of consultations and key threats affecting nature, most notably the UK Retained EU Law Bill.

Mobilising and empowering communities to take meaningful action for nature and climate was lifted to new heights with the launch of the 'Nextdoor Nature' project in south and east Belfast. Our Youth Forum also continues to grow from strength to strength with public engagement campaigns such as 'Let Nature In' helping us achieve our goal of one in four people taking action for nature.

Of course, none of this work would be possible without the dedication and unstinting efforts of the staff and volunteer team, and our skilled Board Members along with the continued and vital support from our loyal members, supporters, businesses, partners, and funders.

Thank you!



Jennifer Fulton

Jennifer Fulton
Chief Executive Officer of Ulster Wildlife



Ken Brundle

Ken Brundle
Chair of Ulster Wildlife

Highlights of our year for wildlife



© Ronald Surgenor

April 22

Launched new Strategy to 2030 to 'bring nature back'

Nature is in crisis and declining at rates unprecedented in human history. Our new strategy for a wilder future by 2030 sets out our vision of a thriving natural world with nature in recovery, where everyone is inspired to get involved, and where wildlife plays a key role in addressing the nature and climate emergencies. Together, and with the support of local communities, businesses, farmers, landowners and our members who stand with us, we are in the best place possible to turn our vision into a reality – and ensure the recovery of our natural world. Read our strategy: ulsterwildlife.org/publications



May 22

Nextdoor Nature launched to empower local communities to help nature flourish

Thanks to funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Nextdoor Nature is bringing people together in south and east Belfast to help nature flourish. We are supporting communities to put their ideas into action and make small changes on their doorsteps that will help put nature into recovery. Micro-projects are being brought to life in places where green spaces and access to nature have eroded over time, driven by galvanised communities who are finding a new passion for wildlife.



June 22

Climate Change Act becomes law

After years of campaigning with other environmental organisations, our Youth Forum, the public, and with support from our members, Northern Ireland finally has a Climate Change Act. This was a historic moment – just over two years after the Assembly declared a 'Climate Emergency' – and is the first-ever legislation in Northern Ireland to drive forward action to tackle the climate and nature crises. The Act includes a target of net-zero by 2050, 'Just Transition' principles including a fund to support agriculture, a nature-based solutions amendment, and provision for a Climate Commissioner.



© Scottish Shark Tagging Programme

July 22

Four years of shark conservation celebrated

Our four-year project to safeguard the future of endangered sharks, skates and rays (elasmobranchs) ended with some fantastic achievements. We trained and supported dedicated anglers to become tagging champions. We also trained 80 anglers in best practice handling techniques with over 640 shark, skates, and rays tagged and recorded. This tagging data, alongside over 4,000 eggcase records submitted by the public, provides vital information needed to protect important elasmobranch nursery and pupping grounds.



© Philip McErlean

August 22

Record lizard sightings at Slievenacloy Nature Reserve

Our Slievenacloy Nature Reserve, in the Belfast Hills, is the perfect hotspot for the common lizard – Ireland's only native reptile – where it can be seen basking on old fence posts, paths and rocks on warm days. Last summer, lizard surveyor Philip McErlean, spotted a total of 48 common lizards – 18 adults and 30 neonates – a record for one day.



© Jon Hawkins Surrey Hills Photography

September 22

New online sightings portal goes live

We launched a new online recording facility so that the public can submit their sightings of red squirrel, barn owl, and pine marten – three key Northern Ireland priority species we are focusing our conservation efforts on to help reverse their fortunes. Sightings of these three key species, along with grey squirrels and long-eared owls, will help us build a better picture of their distribution across Northern Ireland, so we can target our work more effectively. Record your sightings: ulsterwildlife.org/record-sightings

Highlights of our year for wildlife



© Ronald Sargen

October 22

Turning the tide to save the Irish Sea

We joined forces with other conservation bodies in the Irish Sea region to find solutions to the challenges nature is facing across the Irish Sea. The Irish Sea is incredibly rich in wildlife but heavily used with limited protection and proper management. Together, we produced a Review of the Irish Sea 2022 which laid down our vision and calls to action to protect and improve its health. We want to see collaboration across national borders to achieve a well-managed and ecologically coherent network of Marine Protected Areas and truly sustainable fisheries.



© Mark Hamlin 2020 VISION

November 22

Defend Nature campaign launched

The introduction of the proposed Retained EU Law Bill, which could see vital pieces of environmental legislation of EU-origin scrapped, required a rapid response to ensure decades of wins for wildlife and wild places were not lost. We joined forces with fellow environmental charities to send a joint letter to NI Ministers as well as engaging with key local politicians to speak out against this Bill. We also worked with The Wildlife Trusts to mobilise public support in the form of letters and a postcard campaign to MP constituency offices.



© Ronald Sargen

December 22

Launch of annual appeal for seabird conservation

To help match-fund the purchase of a new boat for our seabird conservation on our Isle of Muck Nature Reserve, off Islandmagee, we appealed to our members and supporters to raise £5,000. This natural treasure is home to the third largest colony of cliff nesting seabirds in Northern Ireland, from razorbills to kittiwakes. Owning our own vessel enables us to step-up essential conservation work when it's needed the most, respond to incidents quickly, and undertake more regular seabird monitoring. We were thrilled to raise over £10,000, thanks to our supporters. 'Tystie' made its maiden voyage in February with the additional funds raised helping to purchase essential boat equipment.



© Adam Gerrard

January 23

Red squirrel release at Castle Ward sparks hope for iconic mammal

Four red squirrels were successfully introduced to Castle Ward estate, outside Strangford, in a bid to establish a new population of this key native species. The introduction was part of an ongoing effort between the National Trust, Ulster Wildlife, Belfast Zoo, Northern Ireland Environment Agency and the Heart of Down Red Squirrel Group to secure the long-term future of this iconic mammal. The location was carefully chosen as it has ample woodland habitat and, most importantly, it is free from invasive grey squirrels – the biggest threat to the red squirrels' survival.



© Giles Knight

February 23

Collaboration with farmers in Leitrim

Our Fermanagh Environmental Farming Scheme Group collaborated with Leitrim Sustainable Agriculture Group including a series of reciprocal farm visits. This helped improve understanding of the importance and challenges of farming wet species-rich grasslands that deliver for nature and are unique to this border region. The collaboration also resulted in good sharing of ideas and joint bids for Shared Island funding of which we await the outcome.



March 23

Positive breeding year celebrated for barn owls

One of our most vulnerable farmland birds, the barn owl, had a positive breeding year in 2022. Twenty-four barn owl chicks fledged from eight known breeding pairs – a significant increase in chicks from 2021. Two new nest sites were also discovered in Co Down helping to boost the bird's fragile population, which is estimated to be less than 30 breeding pairs. Barn owls were badly hit in 2021, as the wet spring and hot summer resulted in a poor breeding season, so this is welcome news for our struggling population. Read the 2022 barn owl report: ulsterwildlife.org/barn-owls



Small heath butterfly at Slievenacloy Nature Reserve © Ronald Surgenor

Bringing nature back

Our new strategy to put nature into recovery by 2030 has ambitious goals and builds upon our work over the last 45 years to deliver impactful change for nature. It drives us towards our vision of a wilder future, where everyone is inspired to get involved in nature's recovery, and where wildlife plays a key role in addressing the nature and climate emergencies. Although it is a bold and complex challenge, it is a necessity — and the solution to the very real and present dangers that nature and people face in the midst of a climate and nature emergency.

Our ability to galvanize people to take action, to work collaboratively to achieve the greatest impact for nature, and our knowledge, experience, 'localness' and innovative ways of working, are our core strengths. Together, and with the support of local communities, farmers, landowners, businesses, and our members who stand with us, we are in the best place possible to turn our vision into a reality — and ensure the recovery of our natural world.

Public Benefit

- The Trustees of Ulster Wildlife have taken into account the Charity Commission's guidance on Public Benefit, and consider it fully when planning and reviewing the charity's actions and outcomes and in planning our future activities.
- This Trustees' Report shows how we performed against our strategic outcomes in 2022/23.
- Ulster Wildlife's charitable objectives as set out in our Articles of Association can be found on page 32.

Our Vision

A wilder future where people and nature are thriving together

Our Purpose

Our purpose is to protect and restore nature on land and at sea. We will play our part in ending the climate and ecological emergencies, creating a society where nature is valued and is part of our daily lives.

Our Strategic Outcomes for 2030

1. NATURE - Nature is in recovery and wildlife is thriving across Northern Ireland.

2. PEOPLE - More people are taking positive action for nature and climate and are benefiting from time spent in nature.

3. CLIMATE - Nature-based solutions are playing a central role in addressing climate change.

Outcome 1 Nature

Nature is in recovery and wildlife is thriving across Northern Ireland

With one in ten species at risk of extinction here, we need to reverse the decline and bring nature back. It has become clear that protecting what we have left is no longer enough. It is our aim to create new spaces for nature by connecting habitats and restoring landscapes, and by working collaboratively to help species and habitats recover.

857 hectares of land managed for wildlife (equivalent to 2,116 football pitches)

400 farmers and landowners received advice

40k ha of farms whose management we influenced.

108 gardens surveyed by the public for hedgehogs

Barn owl chick, Co Down



Barn Owls

With fewer than 30 breeding pairs of barns owls in Northern Ireland, we continued to carry out a range of conservation actions to help this iconic farmland bird recover.

Barn owls faced a challenging breeding season in 2021, so we were delighted to receive more positive news in 2022. Across Northern Ireland, at known nest sites, there were eight broods, resulting in 24 chicks fledging – a considerable increase compared to the previous year. A number of new nest sites were also discovered in nest boxes that we had previously erected, in collaboration with volunteers and partners.

Twenty additional nest boxes were installed in strategic locations during the winter to help barn owls from existing nests expand their range to these newly established sites. Our aim is to create a network of nest boxes and suitable barn owl habitats across the country, which will enable this priority species to recover, spread and ultimately thrive using the 'Nature Recovery Network' approach.

We received substantial interest from landowners eager to help and conducted 34 on-site visits to assess farms for their suitability as barn owl habitats, providing valuable land management advice in the process.

Additionally, we received a considerable number of barn owl and long-eared owl sightings and launched a new sightings database to help streamline the recording process.

Red squirrel © Ronald Surgenor



Red Squirrels

Following the launch of our Red Squirrel Conservation Strategy for Northern Ireland, we have been actively supporting local red squirrel groups in their conservation efforts. We have also been collaborating with local councils to assist them in implementing measures to safeguard this priority species.

To ensure the long-term monitoring of red squirrels, pine martens, and grey squirrels, our dedicated staff, volunteers, and external partners conducted a comprehensive survey to determine their presence or absence across Northern Ireland. Woodlands were surveyed across Northern Ireland – 218 in total – revealing a significant rise in pine marten presence over the last five years.

To help simplify data collection and to inform conservation action, we developed and launched a new sightings database for the public to record red squirrels, grey squirrels and pine martens. A grey squirrel control database was also developed for volunteers.

Additionally, we collaborated with the Northern Ireland Squirrel Forum and the National Trust to successfully introduce red squirrels to the Castle Ward estate.

Hedgehog survey at Slievenacloy Nature Reserve



Hedgehogs

We teamed up again with NUI Galway last year for the Irish Hedgehog Survey to help find out more about these much-loved mammals. This citizen science project encourages the public to submit sightings of hedgehogs and carry out surveys using footprint tunnels and camera traps.

Over 1,000 people in Northern Ireland signed up to take part in the survey, which ran from May to September, with sightings collected all year round. In total, 390 hedgehog sightings were submitted – a huge increase since the survey began in 2020. Sixteen hedgehog talks and workshops were delivered, with 70 people trained in the survey methodology.

Along with a number of other organisations, we carried out 15 Local Area Surveys; these consisted of 10 tunnels placed in a 1km square for five nights. A number of our nature reserves were surveyed including Balloo, Bog Meadows, Slievenacloy and Glenarm. We had a fantastic uptake from the public and our members with 108 surveys carried out in people's gardens. This data is important to establish a baseline for hedgehogs and build a better picture of their distribution, so we can work to secure their future.

We have also been raising awareness of hedgehogs and encouraging people to create hedgehog-friendly gardens through our 'Let Nature In' wildlife gardening campaign.

Tystie transporting sheep to Isle of Muck Nature Reserve



Nature Reserves

Our nature reserves cover nearly 850 hectares of land spread across 19 sites that include some of Northern Ireland's most important habitats and species. From a small field in the Glens of Antrim safeguarding a rare plant to a vast expanse of wilderness in the Belfast Hills, our nature reserves are equally important in their conservation efforts.

A key highlight of the year was the acquisition of a new boat named 'Tystie' to aid our seabird conservation work at the Isle of Muck – our sincere thanks to everyone who generously donated to our appeal. At Glenullin Bog, monitoring of our efforts to raise water levels through damming and bunding yielded positive results, confirming the first steps in the restoration of this 45-hectare lowland raised bog.

As is the nature of the natural world, it was a year of highs and lows for many priority species we help to protect. There were record counts of small eggar moth webs at Umbra, while nesting kittiwakes hit their highest ever numbers at Isle of Muck, although a disappointing number of chicks fledged thereafter. Slievenacloy saw a record number of common lizards surveyed, and Devon carpet moth was recorded again at Glenarm, proving that the latter species has started colonising Northern Ireland. Beyond this, it was another year of hard work from our staff and volunteers with the reward of conserving and restoring our native wildlife – a fantastic effort by all involved.

Protected Sites

We continued to work in partnership with the Ministry of Defence to support the management of Ballykinler and Magilligan Special Areas of Conservation (SACs).

Our previous suspension of scrub cutting at Ballykinler ended with the removal of 10 hectares of thick gorse, which was obstructing the growth of crucial plants and covering the significant grey-dune grassland habitat. Furthermore, we resumed scrub cutting at Magilligan and successfully eliminated three hectares of dense blackthorn scrub. We also treated scrub that had been cut in the previous three years at both locations to prevent regrowth.

Surveys were completed for a number of priority species including petalwort, marsh fritillary butterfly, scarce crimson and gold moth, northern colletes bee and small eggar moth.



Scarce crimson & gold moth, Magilligan SAC © Adam Mantell

NRN partners at Clondeboy Estate



Nature Recovery Networks

We continued to work with project partners RSPB NI, National Trust and Woodland Trust to develop ways to adopt a landscape-scale approach to nature's recovery using Nature Recovery Networks (NRNs) – more, bigger, better and joined-up wildlife-rich places to benefit people and wildlife.

A second series of knowledge-sharing webinars took place focusing on work already underway in Northern Ireland and exploring our next steps. A suite of educational videos were also produced to provide greater understanding of the Nature Recovery Network approach. Finally, partners had the opportunity to visit stakeholders involved in the design and delivery of the Central Scotland Green Network, providing ample ideas and inspiration.



Engaging with farmers in Co Fermanagh © Giles Knight

Environmental Farming Scheme

Membership of our Environmental Farming Scheme (EFS) Group programme, funded by the Department of Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs (DAERA), continued to grow. This is one of five pilot schemes in Northern Ireland designed to support farmers to deliver nature conservation at scale through agri-environment schemes.

Our group facilitators worked with 441 farmers last year to engage them in positive land management; this included 24 group events, 268 one-to-one mentoring sessions and 152 farm walkovers.

We also added around 75 farms to the Higher Level Environmental Farming Scheme – which focuses on designated sites and priority habitats – putting approximately 4,000 hectares of high nature value land into positive management across four counties. In total, we have engaged with over 20% of all farmers with EFS (Higher) Agreements.

We engaged in a diverse range of activities, from identifying woodland and meadow plants and providing guidance on tree planting and hedge management to hosting peatland restoration demonstrations. We delved into sustainable farming concepts and provided valuable guidance on paperwork and record keeping. Additionally, we organised unique farm walks conducted after dark and addressed the impacts of ash dieback. We also collaborated with farmer groups in Co. Leitrim and worked closely with farmers and partner organisations to assist landowners in safeguarding priority species, including marsh fritillary, curlew, barn owls and red squirrels.

In addition, through on-the-ground surveys, facilitators and associates added 212 hectares of land to priority habitat maps, mainly species-rich grassland in Fermanagh, ensuring it can be protected and made eligible for agri-environment measures in the future.

Public Affairs, Policy and Legislation

It has been a critical year for policy and public affairs. World leaders finally signed the Montreal Biodiversity Framework at the UN Biodiversity Conference (COP15) in December 2022. This is the most significant global agreement yet to tackle biodiversity loss with over 23 targets agreed.

Although not binding, governments must show their progress in meeting the targets within their biodiversity plans. In Northern Ireland, we have been working with the Department of Agriculture, Environment, and Rural Affairs (DAERA) to co-develop a new Biodiversity Strategy and will be pressing for legally binding targets and strong reporting duties to be put into place. We also ran a communications campaign throughout COP15 to engage our supporter base and highlight the urgent need for local action.

The UK Government's proposed Retained EU Law Bill, which could see vital pieces of environmental legislation of EU origin scrapped, required a rapid response to ensure decades of wins for wildlife and wild places were not lost. We joined forces with fellow environmental charities to send a joint letter to NI Ministers as well as engaging with key local politicians to speak out against this Bill. We also worked with The Wildlife Trusts to mobilise public support in the form of template letters and a postcard campaign to MP constituency offices.

One of the biggest highlights of the year was in June when the long-awaited Northern Ireland Climate Change Act became law. As part of the NI Climate Coalition, we campaigned throughout the legislative process and provided oral and written evidence to the Assembly. This is the

first-ever legislation in Northern Ireland to drive forward action to tackle the climate and nature crises, although much work now needs to be done developing the first carbon budgets and sectoral plans.

We also responded to several other major consultations during the year, including the Draft Ammonia Strategy, Wild Birds Licenses, and the Republic of Ireland's fourth National Biodiversity Action Plan.

As a lead member of the Northern Ireland Marine Task Force, we worked with DAERA to help co-design vital new conservation strategies for Northern Ireland. These included the Blue Carbon Action Plan, to improve understanding of how coastal marine habitats can contribute to climate mitigation and adaptation strategies, the development of a Seabird Conservation Strategy, and an Elasmobranch Conservation Strategy to provide guidelines for the conservation of local sharks, skates and rays.

We also collaboratively responded to several key consultations affecting the marine environment. These included the Draft Joint Fisheries Statement, Management measures on the use of fast craft and personal watercraft in MPA's, Hand-gathering of intertidal shellfish in NI: a call for evidence, and the Future Strategy for the Marine and Fisheries Fund.

Barn owl success at Ballycruttle Farm

“Ballycruttle Farm has been involved with the RSPB’s Co. Down Farmland Initiative for a few years now, providing rich-seed habitats, rough grass margins, and hedgerows for a number of birds on the red list such as yellowhammers, linnets, tree sparrows, reed buntings and skylarks.

During conversations with RSPB, we talked about erecting barn owl boxes so they put us in touch with Ulster Wildlife. Ulster Wildlife advised us on the best locations and we set about putting our first box up in February 2021. Thankfully, having a husband who is a tree surgeon made this process a little easier.

On that same evening, we were excited to hear the eerie, long screech of a male barn owl, which continued for a few nights.

One particular evening, as I was chasing a duck to bed, I suddenly became startled by something flying low above my head – the night was silent, so the noise took me by surprise. The next evening, I went out a little earlier to see if my thoughts were correct – and they were; an owl flew out of the box and headed for the woodland.

Excited about our discovery, we invited Ulster Wildlife out and together we observed the barn owl box using infrared binoculars. Hissing sounds confirmed there was at least one chick.

Roll onto the middle of June, and a team arrived to ring what we assumed were two chicks. To our surprise, three chicks awaited us – two boys and a girl!

This was an amazing experience, both for my family and for all of those involved. They are the most beautiful, majestic birds, and we are so proud to have been part of their recovery story.”



Dawn Stocking
Ballycruttle Farm



Dawn Stocking with Ulster Wildlife and RSPBNI representatives



Barn owl chick being ringed

Outcome 2 People

More people are taking positive action for nature and climate and are benefitting from time spent in nature

Without more people taking action themselves, the fight to protect nature and tackle the climate crisis is an insurmountable task. We need to engage and empower people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities to take action and stand up for nature, and also to reconnect people with wild places and green spaces. By increasing the number of people who can speak up for nature, our collective voice will be louder and reach further than ever before.

95 registered volunteers

1,500 volunteer hours donated to nature

1,020 people learned about nature at our events

1,600 gardens signed up to our wildlife gardening campaign

28 Youth Forum members

Corporate volunteers at Ballynahone Bog Nature Reserve

Youth Forum residential at Crawfordsburn



Youth Forum

Our Youth Forum continued to grow with 12 new members joining during the year, providing a platform for young people to speak up for nature, take part in campaigns and take action for wildlife.

A highlight was a weekend residential at Crawfordsburn Country Park where members explored rocky shore ecology and made bird boxes, as well as discussing ways young people can influence change and have their say on the future of the Youth Forum. Other activities this year included 'Leave No Trace' training and contributing to a consultation on DAERA's Green Growth Strategy.

Young people repairing paths at Colin Glen Forest Park



Wild Youth

Young people from north and west Belfast engaged in nature-based wellbeing activities as part of this innovative programme, delivered in conjunction with Belfast Hills Partnership, and funded by the National Lottery Community Fund.

750 young people took part this year, and over 125 young people gained Bronze, Silver or Gold Wild Youth Award certificates in recognition of their time spent connecting with and helping the natural world. Feedback from participants has shown increases in their level of connection with nature as well as their mental wellbeing. A particular highlight of this programme has been the opportunity to work with young people who are new to Northern Ireland and who have arrived here recently seeking asylum.



Our Bright Future

Youth Forum members continued to promote three key policy issues on outdoor learning, green jobs, and the role of young people in decision-making, as part of our work supporting the UK Our Bright Future initiative.

As well as producing a Youth Manifesto for the Environment, forum members also met with local politicians to outline their environmental concerns and to advocate for specific actions in the run up to the Assembly elections in May 2022. Although the initiative ended in November 2022, the legacy of our involvement continues in other youth projects we are now delivering.



Tree talk with Bloomfield Wildlife Watch



Training workshop for youth workers in Belfast

Sustainable Youth Work Curriculum

Training workshops were delivered for youth workers from more than 20 organisations, focusing on the new Sustainable Youth Work curriculum we developed on behalf of the Education Authority.

The workshops gave youth workers the skills and confidence to engage young people with environmental issues. Resources are now available to youth workers across Northern Ireland via the Education Authority website.



Bloomfield group tree planting at Orangefield Park

Wildlife Watch Groups

Wildlife Watch Groups for children continued to grow with 30 members spanning three groups in Lisburn, Bloomfield and Bog Meadows, all run by passionate volunteers.

The groups meet monthly to enjoy activities such as pond dipping, bat walks, and listening to wildlife talks by guest speakers. During the year, the Bloomfield group launched a Tree Trail at Orangefield Park, in conjunction with Belfast City Council, raising the funds to purchase and plant 24 native trees, including signage for locals to enjoy.

Helping Glentoran with their raised beds



Nextdoor Nature

We embraced a new way of working with communities in south and east Belfast by discovering what they need and want in their area to help nature flourish and then supporting them with the skills and tools to take action on their own terms.

A number of community-led projects are now underway to help put nature into recovery, thanks to funding support from the National Lottery Heritage Fund. Glentoran Football Club is supporting local people to grow their own produce, raised beds have been revitalised at The Larder foodbank, wildlife gardening workshops have been delivered to alleyway gardeners in south Belfast, and residents of Wingrove Gardens plan to make their whole street wildlife-friendly. Most importantly, the local communities decide on what happens and drive the change in their own neighbourhoods.

Bog Meadows youth volunteer team



Community Engagement at Bog Meadows

Our work to strengthen a sense of community ownership of Bog Meadows Nature Reserve continued with a range of programmes to engage local residents and community groups, thanks to support from the National Lottery Community Fund.

This included nature connection sessions, wildlife walks, summer schemes, school education sessions, regular adult and youth volunteering opportunities and a Wildlife Watch group for children.

We are also delighted to have been awarded a grant from the Department for Infrastructure to create a 'Community Wildlife Garden'. This will be planned and cultivated in partnership with local community groups to showcase a working wildlife garden and provide a valuable community space for our activities.



'Let Nature In' Wildlife Gardening Campaign

We continued to promote our 'Let Nature In' campaign to encourage more people to make space for nature in their gardens.

Over 1,600 people have signed up to the campaign so far, with regular emails providing tips and advice throughout the year to help people welcome nature into their gardens.



Pine Marten, Co Down © Ronald Surgenor

Yellowhammer © Mark Hamblin 2020 VISION



Defend Nature Campaign

We teamed up with The Wildlife Trusts to mobilise public action to defend nature and put a stop to the UK Government's plans to threaten wildlife with the proposed Retained EU Law Bill.

Over 150 supporters used our template letter or postcard to ask their MPs to scrap the Bill, which could see vital pieces of environmental legislation of EU-origin weakened or removed.

We also joined forces with fellow environmental charities to send a joint letter to NI Ministers as well as engaging with key local politicians to speak out against this Bill.

Portballintrae Armada Interpretation project



Landfill Communities Fund

We helped distribute £276,000 of Landfill Communities Fund contributions from Fermanagh and Omagh District Council and Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council to 17 community and environmental projects.

The Landfill Communities Fund (LCF) is a grant scheme that enables operators of landfill sites to contribute a portion of the monies they pay as landfill tax directly to approved Environmental Bodies, such as Ulster Wildlife, for distribution to projects of environmental and public benefit.

2022 saw an increase in project activity with the effects of the pandemic winding down. For the remaining lifespan of contributions from our two landfill operators, we will continue to maximise the benefits of distributing funding to projects which are aligned with our own strategic goals of promoting health and wellbeing through enjoyment of the environment and rebuilding biodiversity.



Volunteers at Bog Meadows Nature Reserve

Red kite event for members



Exclusive Member Events

We delivered a successful series of online talks for members during the winter, many delivered by guest speakers, on everything from red kites and brent geese to wildlife photography.

We also planned an exclusive programme of member face-to-face events from woodland foraging to coastal walks for the spring and summer months.

Over 100 members joined us for our AGM and Members' Day at Malone House in September with special guest Craig Bennett, CEO of The Wildlife Trusts.

Danske Bank volunteers at Balloo Woodland Nature Reserve



Volunteering

We received tremendous support from 95 registered volunteers with practical conservation tasks on our nature reserves, species conservation efforts, people engagement and office support.

Over 200 corporate volunteers from 24 local businesses joined us at Balloo, Bog Meadows, Slievenacloy and Ballynahone Bog Nature Reserves to lend a hand with invasive species control, litter picks, hedge trimming, path clearing and site maintenance.

Our first native oyster nursery at Bangor Marina received fantastic interest from potential volunteers, with 15 dedicated volunteers now regularly helping us look after the oysters and conducting regular health checks.

Five volunteer student placements from Queen's and Ulster Universities joined our Nature Reserve and Marine teams for the year. They benefitted from a range of training and invaluable on-the-job experience learning about habitat management, invasive species control, GIS mapping, volunteer engagement, and survey data and reporting.



Youth Action For Nature

“ I got involved with Ulster Wildlife’s Youth Forum because I had a desire to connect with other young people with an interest in nature. Looking back, I was isolated in my love for nature and even a bit lost. The Youth Forum gave me a direction for my interest, and the virtual meet-ups allowed me to connect and learn from other young people. The Forum has been instrumental in giving me confidence and a sense of belonging within circles of ecology and environmental advocacy. I was even lucky enough to represent Ulster Wildlife at the Wildlife Trusts’ planning event for the upcoming youth festival.

The Forum is not just a connection-building group, but also a brilliant educational tool. One of my favourite memories was visiting Cuilcagh to learn about peatland restoration with young farmers – it was such a valuable experience, and each interaction with a different issue (like peatland restoration) leaves you a little more invested in it than you were before. In a similar way, meeting others in the Forum that have different interests or approaches can lead to the discovery of new interests – like butterflies!

I’m currently studying Biological Sciences at Queen’s and hope to pursue a career in ecology, or science communication. Not everyone in the Forum will – but I think that’s what makes it special. The Youth Forum supports those wishing to pursue an environmental job but also fosters and maintains an interest and care for nature in those who will not. In the face of the biodiversity and climate crises, we need everyone in all sectors to care – and through the Youth Forum, Ulster Wildlife is playing its part.



Eibhlinn Fee, aged 20
Ulster Youth Forum member

Outcome 3 Climate

Nature-based solutions are playing a critical role in addressing the impacts of climate change in Northern Ireland

We are in the midst of a nature and climate crises and neither can be resolved in isolation. The natural world can provide its own solutions to combat and reverse these threats. We are promoting the implementation of nature-based solutions such as the restoration of peatlands and of coastal blue carbon habitats to provide carbon sequestration and storage while supporting resilient wildlife.

50 hectares of peatland restored across 3 sites

34,500^{m3} of seawater filtered by our native oyster nursery



Peatland restoration in action

Restoring peatlands for nature and climate

We were a key delivery partner in the EU funded (Interreg VA) Collaborative Action for the Natura Network (CANN) project, in which we oversaw the restoration of hundreds of hectares of priority peatland habitats, from blanket bog on Cuilcagh Mountain to the species-rich fens in Lecale.

The CANN project ended in September 2022 with the completion of Conservation Action Plans for 11 Special Areas of Conservation (SAC). Since then, with funding from the DAERA Environment Fund, we have used these plans to deliver further restoration on key peatland habitats across Northern Ireland. This includes the installation of hundreds of new dams at Fairy Water Bogs and Tully Bog SAC in Co Tyrone. Additionally, we cleared invasive reed and scrub at Carrowcarlin Fen Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI) in Co Down using specialist amphibious machinery. We also continued efforts to control invasive rhododendron at Peatlands Park SAC, with over five hectares treated in areas that had never been addressed before.

Alongside this, we have been developing a 'pipeline' of potential restoration sites and collecting the data needed to deliver works on the ground when funding becomes available. We've collected LiDAR data (light detection and ranging), aerial imagery, and developed restoration plans for a variety of new sites including Teal Lough SAC and Magho Cliffs ASSI. We have also been working closely with other environmental organisations and making use of our new drone technology to collect data on areas such as the Mourne Mountains and Colebrooke Bogs.

Monitoring of atmospheric ammonia on sensitive sites has also been a key part of our work over the past year. We have continued to work with Northern Ireland Environment Agency to collect and analyse ammonia deposition on both Curran Bog and Turmennan Fen SAC. These efforts form part of wider monitoring taking place at a national level and will help strengthen policy and regulation around atmospheric ammonia going forward.

In February 2022, we purchased Haughey's Bog, a degraded peatland site in County Tyrone, with the aim of showcasing a range of peatland restoration techniques and developing a best practice site.

Restoring blue carbon habitats and species

We installed our second native oyster nursery at Glenarm Marina in March 2023 to help bring back this endangered species and provide a host of wider benefits to the marine environment.

The native oyster (*Ostrea edulis*) was once a common sight along the Glenarm coastline up until the mid-1800s when overfishing, disease, invasive species and pollution decimated the local population. To help revive the species, we have installed over 800 mature native oysters in 30 purpose-built cages suspended over the edges of the marina's pontoons, thanks to funding from DAERA and a generous donation from Wilson Resources.

The nursery will release millions of oyster larvae every summer, which will settle onto the seabed and support the oyster's natural recovery. These ocean superheroes will also help boost biodiversity by providing nursery grounds for fish and other creatures, improve water clarity and quality by filtering 162,000 litres of water every day, and tackle climate change by storing carbon in their shells.

At our first native oyster nursery in Bangor Marina, the oysters are thriving thanks to support from a fantastic group of volunteers who have helped us keep the cages clean, carry out health checks, and monitor the oysters' growth. Since April 2022, the average growth rate has been ~25mm with an average increase in weight of ~30g, similar to that observed in wild populations.

Over 60 marine species have also been recorded at the Bangor nursery since it was established, including common prawn, juvenile crab, pipefish, lumpsuckers, tompot blennies, spined stickleback fish and, on two occasions, the critically endangered European eel. This is a win for wildlife and as the oyster nursery grows and matures, we envisage a lot more species being discovered within these unique hanging mini reef systems.



Native oyster shell



Launch of Glenarm oyster nursery



Oyster cage at Bangor Marina



Helen Marks, Radio 4, with staff and volunteers at the Bangor oyster nursery

Bringing Back Native Oysters

“ I have always been interested in wildlife, whether it be on land or under the sea where I enjoyed diving down to wrecks and seeing the diversity of the wildlife down there.

Since I stopped diving, I had been looking for something to occupy my spare time. Then I heard about Ulster Wildlife's oyster nursery in Bangor Marina, so I went along to the volunteer induction day and was so inspired I had to get involved.

Although it is not very glamorous hoisting up and handling dirty oyster cages, I enjoy weighing and measuring the oysters to see their development and meeting new friends with like-minded interests.

It was fantastic to see a local radio station come down to the marina to talk to us and find out about the restoration project. I was particularly chuffed when they asked me to explain to the listeners what activity we were doing and why we choose to volunteer.

Over the last few months, I have learned a lot about how the oysters cluster together and make a sort of reef, which in turn provides a home and shelter for other marine life. I've learned how overfishing and pollution have drastically reduced their population in once large thriving beds, which in turn has affected the ecosystem, so it's crucial we redress the situation and start nurseries to re-introduce the native oyster back to the sea bed.



David Hill
Oyster Nursery Volunteer
at Bangor Marina

”



Thank you to our supporters

We would like to express our profound gratitude to all our valued members for their unwavering support throughout the year. Their dedication has been the cornerstone of our conservation efforts and has enabled us to make a significant impact for nature.

We are equally thankful for the generous gifts in wills received this year, as well as donations from businesses that have supported our work. In addition, funders and philanthropic loans have been key to developing long-term conservation projects and purchasing key areas of land for habitat restoration.

With this support, we have been able to implement vital conservation projects, restore habitats, protect endangered species, and create safe havens for wildlife to flourish. Thank you!

Tystie - our new boat for the Isle of Muck Nature Reserve



Members

Many charities are feeling the effects of the cost of living crisis on donations and regular giving. With fewer people giving to charity, our membership income dropped slightly this year. Our existing members continue to be an extremely important source of unrestricted funds and we were heartened to see the vast majority of members staying with us even in these difficult times, aided in part by an increase in member-exclusive events and benefits over the past year. Member generosity is the driving force behind our conservation efforts.

Our annual appeal raised more than £10,000 in match funding for the purchase of a new boat for seabird conservation at our Isle of Muck Nature Reserve. Our generous supporters chose to name the boat "Tystie" – the local/Scots name for black guillemot.

Swallow at Slieveadacy Nature Reserve © Ronald Surgenor



Legacy and In-Memory

Gifts in wills and in-memory donations, no matter the size, allow a person's passion for nature to live on. Every legacy or in-memory donation allows us to protect and buy more nature reserves, save more species, help support new nature champions, and ensure that future generations can experience nature.

Each year, more people are recognising the significant impact a gift in your will to Ulster Wildlife can make. This year, committed members and supporters left specific bequests to Ulster Wildlife and in-memory gifts were also received. Several people remembered loved ones via online donations.

Power NI volunteers at Slieveadacy Nature Reserve

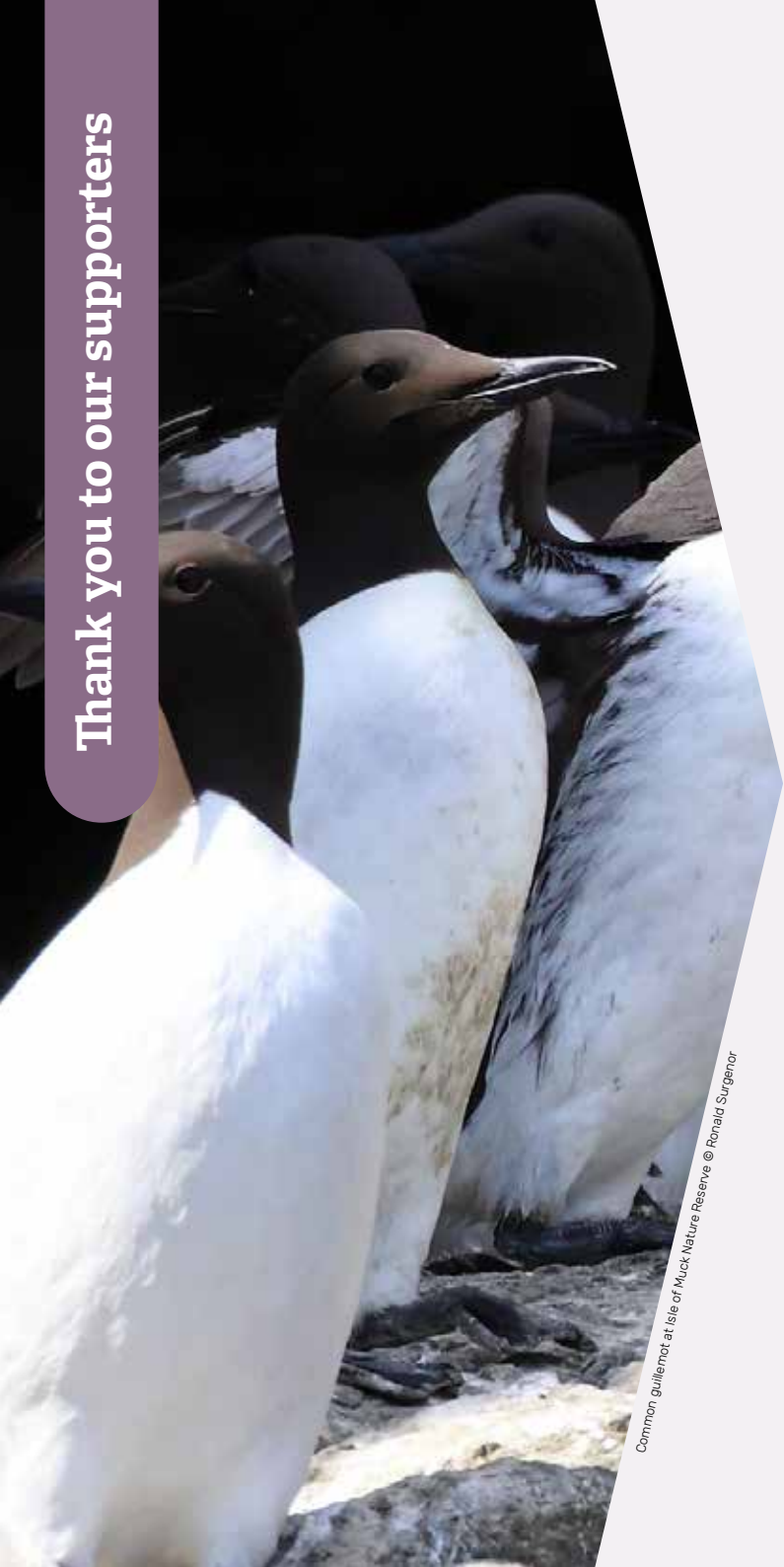


Businesses

We are proud to work with many local businesses to support nature's recovery. Working with others is crucial to tackling the nature and climate crises. Financial support from local businesses, in the form of unrestricted and in-kind donations or through the commissioning of our Ecological Consultancy services, is crucial to supplement our other funding streams. In addition, for these businesses, supporting Ulster Wildlife demonstrates their commitment to championing local nature conservation efforts to both their employees and customers.

Some of the businesses supporting local nature conservation efforts this year: Almac, Ardbarron Trust, The Boulevard Banbridge (Ulster Wildlife nominated as Charity of the Year), ENCIRC, Field Day Ireland, Finnebrogue, Mash Direct, Moy Park, NI Trucks, PowerNI, Spirit Aerosystems and Wilson Resources.

Thank you to our supporters



Common guillemot at Isle of Muck Nature Reserve © Ronald Surgenor

Six spot burnet moth at Slievenacloy Nature Reserve © Ronald Surgenor



Round-leaved sundew © Simon Gray



Funders

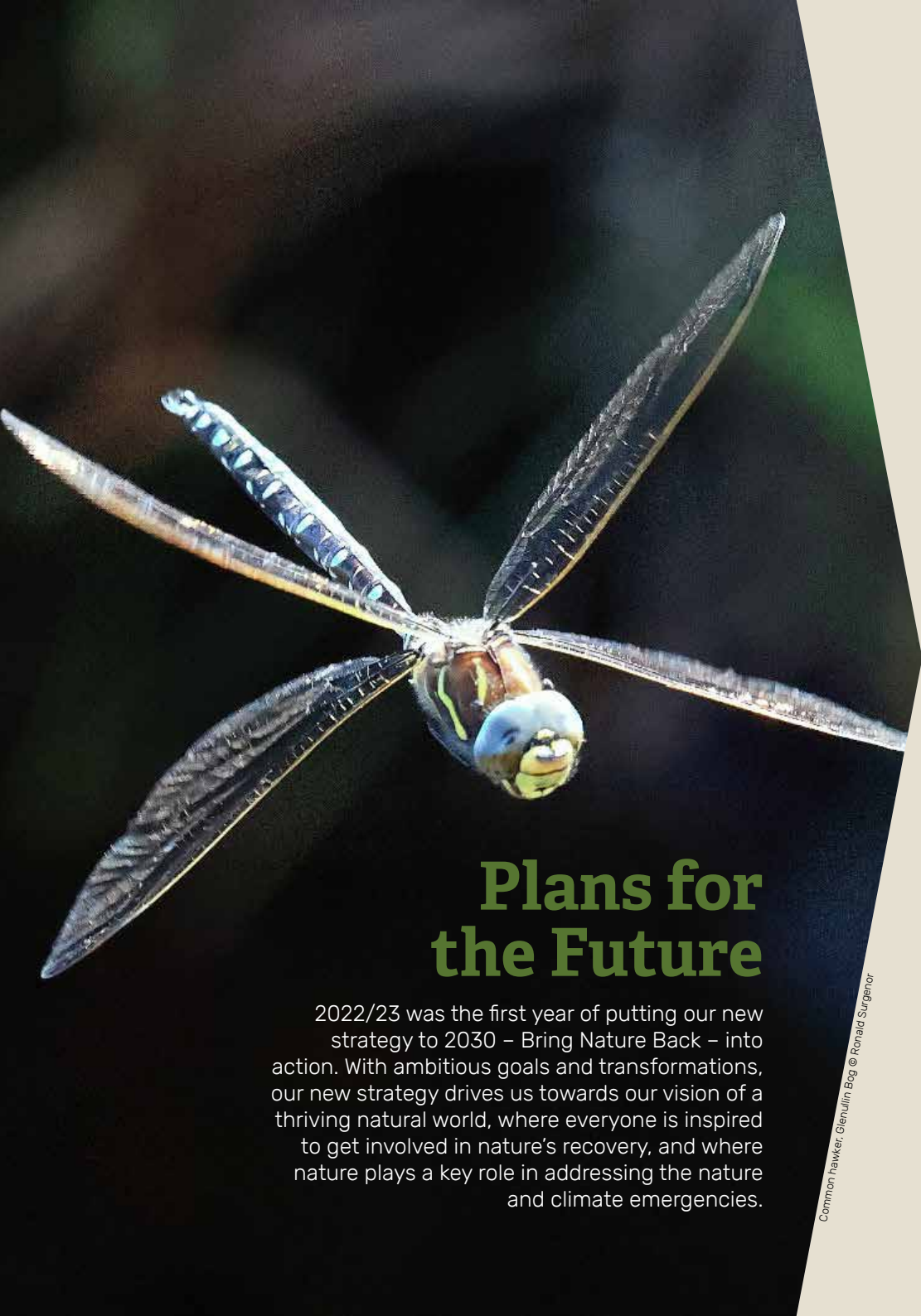
Charities rely on a wide range of funding streams including statutory (government) funding and charitable trust funding to help support some of our larger projects and areas of work. We are very grateful to our funding partners for providing funding for specific projects last year.

Thanks to our funding partners this year: Ards and North Down Borough Council, Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, Education Authority, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, Garfield Weston Foundation, INTERREG VA, Marine Institute, Ministry of Defense, National Lottery Community Fund, National Lottery Heritage Fund and Department of Communities.

Philanthropic Lenders

We believe that part of the solution to aid nature's recovery is to acquire and restore land. However, cash flow when land comes up for sale can often be a major barrier. Philanthropic lenders enable charities to respond quickly to land purchase and restoration opportunities when they arise, without the need to raise the funds first.

In February 2022, we were able to purchase a commercially cut-over peatland site in Co Tyrone with the aim of showcasing a range of peatland restoration techniques and developing a best practice site. A Philanthropic loan from John Smith, and gifts in Wills from supporters, helped secure this space for nature until funding from the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs was received.



Plans for the Future

2022/23 was the first year of putting our new strategy to 2030 – Bring Nature Back – into action. With ambitious goals and transformations, our new strategy drives us towards our vision of a thriving natural world, where everyone is inspired to get involved in nature's recovery, and where nature plays a key role in addressing the nature and climate emergencies.

Common Hawker, Glenullin Bog © Ronald Surgenor

Outcome 1: Nature is in recovery and wildlife is thriving across Northern Ireland.

Fundamental to achieving this outcome is the development and establishment of a national 'Nature Recovery Network' for Northern Ireland – a strategic approach to creating more, bigger, better and joined-up spaces for wildlife to thrive.

We will continue to explore opportunities for our nature reserves to deliver as part of a connected network within the wider landscape, while also delivering specific conservation actions for key species.

Our continued work engaging farmers and landowners is critical and we will work more closely with the fishing industry to ensure our seas are well-managed for nature.

Outcome 2: More people are taking positive action for nature and climate and are benefitting from time spent in nature.

Supporting and empowering people of all ages to become agents of change is critical to making the significant changes we need to address climate change and nature's decline.

We will continue to engage, empower and amplify the voice of people across Northern Ireland to speak up for and take action for nature through our campaigning work and community mobilising programmes.

We will also continue to engage younger generations in issues that will affect their future by growing our Youth Forum and by supporting youth-led nature activities. In addition, we will develop our Children and Young People Strategy to embed this new approach in our work going forward.

Maintaining and strengthening our membership and supporter network is key to delivering on the ambition of our strategy and a comprehensive growth plan and new staff structure will be put into place to expand our membership support base over the next five years.

Outcome 3: Nature-based solutions are playing a central role in addressing climate change.

Over the next number of years, we will work to tackle both the climate and biodiversity crises at a local level, recognising and promoting the importance of nature-based solutions. We will expand our work to restore peatlands, develop new native oyster nurseries, and establish new partnership projects to deliver blue carbon habitat restoration such as seagrass. Together, these initiatives will provide long-term carbon sequestration and storage while also promoting diverse and resilient wildlife.

Financial Review at 31 March 2023

Ulster Wildlife's financial position remained stable during the year and a modest surplus on unrestricted activities was achieved.

Sources of Income

Unrestricted income is revenue generated by the charity for its general purposes. It can be used at the discretion of the charity on any of the charity's objects and a substantial component is donations from our members and supporters.

Unrestricted income is 7% lower than the previous year (-£46k). Donations and legacies decreased (-£65k) as did consultancy income (-£14k). This was partly offset by an additional grant from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation of £35k to contribute towards the cost of living increases.

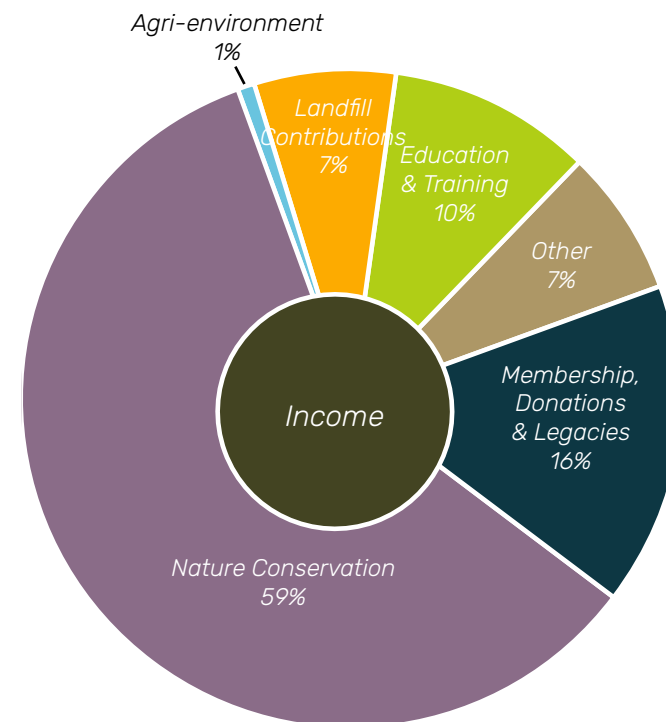
Restricted income is income given to the charity for specific purposes. It may be a grant for a specific piece of conservation work or education activity or funds to be awarded as grants to third parties, in line with specific grant guidelines.

Ulster Wildlife's restricted income has two main components, grants for specific conservation and education

activity which is delivered by the charity; and Landfill Communities Funds where grants are awarded by the charity to third parties for purposes defined under the Landfill Communities Fund guidelines.

Grants from third parties awarded to Ulster Wildlife for the direct delivery of specific conservation outcomes decreased by £260k in the year. In the previous year DAERA contributed £594k towards the purchase of additional lands at Slievenacloy which increased the 21/22 income substantially. DAERA continued to award Challenge Fund income however in 22/23 for conservation work on peatlands, our marine environment, priority species and nature reserves including the £75k towards the purchase of a peatland site at Haughey's Bog.

Other grants received in the year are outlined in Note 4 to the Financial Statements.



Income	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds £	Ratio
Membership, Donations & Legacies	453	72	525	16%
Nature Conservation	-	1,919	1,919	59%
Agri-environment payments	28	-	28	1%
Landfill Tax Contributions	-	227	227	7%
Environmental Education & Training	-	314	314	10%
Other Income	181	45	226	7%
Total Income	662	2,577	3,239	100%

Financial Review at 31 March 2023

How the Charity Spent its Resources

Overall expenditure was £273k lower in the year to 31 March 2023 than in the previous year.

In line with the income split, a large part of the expenditure is on conservation and education activity.

Restricted projects make a contribution to core overhead costs for time and expenses incurred in running the projects. After taking this contribution into account an unrestricted surplus of £23k was generated.

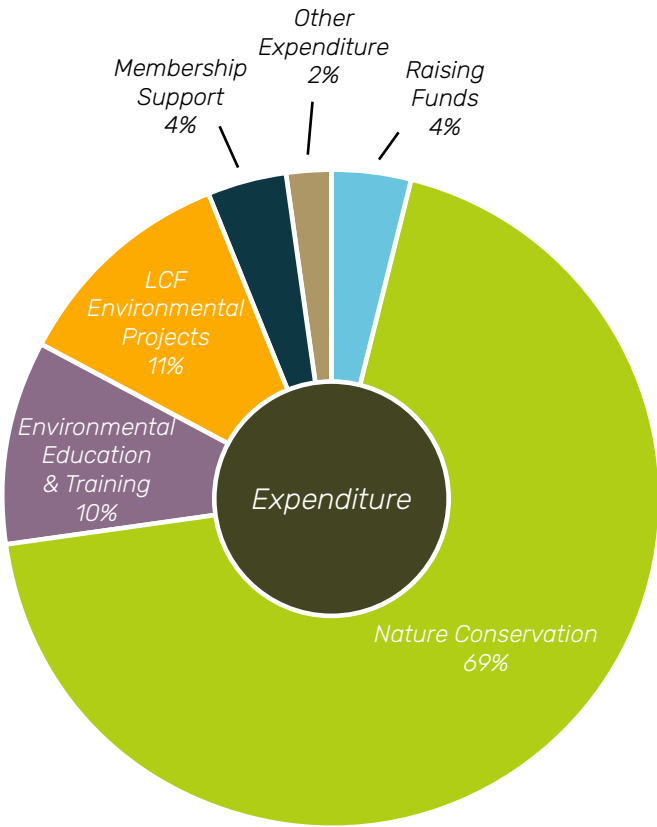
The surplus is in keeping with the charity’s objectives which are to deliver conservation outcomes rather than a surplus of income over expenditure. A modest surplus is, however, necessary in order to maintain financial stability and help to secure the long term viability of the charity.

After expenditure on restricted projects, the balance on restricted funds amounted to £500k.

This balance represents income received relating to projects in the year to 31 March 2023 where expenditure was incurred in prior years or will be incurred in future years and was in line with expectations. £184k relates to income received from DAERA for the purchase of peatland at Haughey’s Bog and capital equipment including where the expenditure has been capitalised on the balance sheet.

Restricted financial reserves cannot be utilised by the charity, except for the very specific purposes set out by the funder. These financial reserves are therefore not available to fund either general working capital requirements or any unexpected events.

Expenditure	Total Funds £	Ratio
Raising Funds	95	4%
Nature Conservation	1,870	69%
Environmental Education & Training	274	10%
LCF Environmental Projects	304	11%
Membership Support	125	4%
Other Expenditure	46	2%
Total Expenditure	2,714	100%



Structure, Governance and Management

Ulster Wildlife Trust, (operating as Ulster Wildlife) is registered with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland (NIC101848) and is a not-for-profit company incorporated in Northern Ireland, limited by guarantee (NI 12711). It is an independent body, locally governed, affiliated to The Wildlife Trusts, a federated network of 46 charities across the UK.

The charity is governed by a Board of Trustees (Council) comprised of up to 17 members who serve up to a nine-year term. The Ulster Wildlife Council is responsible for making strategic decisions in relation to policy and procedure within Ulster Wildlife, while day-to-day operational decisions and management is delegated to the Chief Executive, who in turn oversees the staff team of Ulster Wildlife of which there were 36 at the end of March 2023.

All Board Members receive induction training in relation to their role, are provided with a Governance Handbook when they are appointed and adhere to the Code of Good Governance. In addition, in 2022, the Board undertook governance training and carried out a governance review facilitated by Blue Moss consulting. The Board are currently implementing actions arising from this review.

Ulster Wildlife also has an Honorary President, Joe Furphy, who does not have a voting or decision-making role on the Board but contributes to discussions and carries out representation for the Charity.

Details of serving Trustees during 2022/23 can be found to the right.

CHAIRMAN  Ken Brundle (Appointed on 17 September 2013, appointed Chairman on 22 November 2017)	VICE-CHAIR  Stephen Aston Appointed on 07 December 2017, appointed Vice Chairman on 27 September 2018) F & A	VICE-CHAIR  David Sterling (Appointed 16 October 2020, appointed Vice Chair 02 December 2021) E, F & A	HONORARY TREASURER  David Hendron (Appointed on 25 July 2018, appointed Treasurer on 27 September 2018) F & A
COMPANY SECRETARY  Catherine Thompson (Appointed on 14 March 2019, appointed Company Secretary on 18 March 2021) G	COUNCIL MEMBER  Anna Barclay (Appointed 24 November 2020) E, G	COUNCIL MEMBER  Joe Breen (Appointed 9 June 2022) E	COUNCIL MEMBER  Bob Brown (Appointed 16 October 2020) E
COUNCIL MEMBER  Fiona Davey (Appointed on 19 November 2015) G	COUNCIL MEMBER  Stephen Maginn (Appointed 05 December 2019 Resigned 01 Oct 2022) F	COUNCIL MEMBER  Seamus McKee (Appointed 18 March 2021) F	COUNCIL MEMBER  Stephen Smith (Appointed 24 November 2020) F
COUNCIL MEMBER  Helen Surgenor (Appointed 24 November 2020) F	COUNCIL MEMBER  John Wittchell (Appointed on 07 December 2017,) E	COUNCIL MEMBER  Ed Wright (Appointed on 07 October 2015) F	HONORARY PRESIDENT  Joe Furphy



Red squirrel, Co Fermanagh © Adam Gerrard



Pine marten, Co Down © Ronald Surgenor



Green hairstreak butterfly, Slievenacloy Nature Reserve © Ronald Surgenor

Changes to the Ulster Wildlife Council during 2022/2023

Stephen Maginn resigned from Council on 01 October 2022. Joe Breen was confirmed at the AGM on 01 October 2022 after co-option on 09 June 2022.

The governance sub-structure comprises of four sub-committees: Governance, Finance & Audit, Environment and Fundraising. This governance framework is designed to ensure that we are an accountable, effective and efficient charity and to manage risk at the required level.

1. The Governance Committee (G) ensures that the Ulster Wildlife Council fulfils its legal, ethical and functional responsibilities through adequate governance policy development, skills audits, recruitment strategies for Council Members, training programmes, monitoring of Council activities and evaluation of Council's performance, human resources and health & safety management.

2. The Finance & Audit Committee (F&A) supports Council in ensuring that the effective governance of Ulster Wildlife is maintained in relation to: Financial and Physical Resources.

3. The Environment Committee (E) provides ongoing strategic input into the organisation's work linked to nature recovery and community action. The remit of this Committee encompasses nature reserves, environmental projects linked to habitats and/or species, and input into regional policy issues.

4. The Fundraising Committee (F) provides ongoing strategic input to the organisation's fundraising activities - with a focus on unrestricted fundraising.

Statement of Trustees' Responsibilities

The Trustees (who are also the Directors of Ulster Wildlife Trust) are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Annual Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and regulations.

Company and charity law requires the Directors to prepare financial statements for each financial year, which give a true and fair view of the state of the affairs of the charitable company and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the Directors are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently,
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities Statement of Recommended Practice,
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent,
- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements,
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charitable company will continue in operation.

The Trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the charity's transactions and disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and to enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Charities

Act 2008. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Provision of Information to Auditors

Each of the individuals who is a Trustee at the date of approval of this report confirms that:

- so far as they are aware, there is no relevant audit information of which the charity's auditor is unaware; and
- they have taken all the steps that they ought to have taken to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the charity's auditors are aware of that information.

Auditor

DNTCA Limited are deemed to be re-appointed under section 487(2) of the Companies Act 2006. This report was approved by the Board on 31 August 2023 and signed on its behalf by

Ken Brundle
Chairman

David Hendron
Honorary Treasurer



Articles of Association

Ulster Wildlife's charitable objectives as set out in our Articles of Association are:

(1) The advancement of environmental protection and improvement, in particular the conservation of all aspects of Northern Ireland and its adjacent areas' wildlife, biodiversity, geodiversity and associated natural beauty for the benefit of present and future generations by:

(a) safeguarding, maintaining and enhancing natural biodiversity and geodiversity through the management of nature reserves (however entitled or however established);

(b) practising, advocating, encouraging, influencing, advising and campaigning for best conservation practice involving land, sea and freshwater management practice in ways that favour biodiversity, geodiversity, ecosystem health, sustainable use of natural resources and sustainable development;

(c) undertaking action, independently or in partnership, to protect threatened habitats, sites of geodiversity or heritage significance, at local, national or international levels on or in water, land and adjacent seas;

(d) taking account of other aspects of the natural heritage on which wildlife is dependent or to which it contributes, including landforms and landscapes;

(e) improving the quality of life of people through supporting a biodiversity, ecosystem, geodiversity and sustainability led approach to the management and design of the natural and built environment.

(2) The advancement of education by raising the public's awareness and knowledge of all aspects of the natural and built heritage, biodiversity and geodiversity of Northern Ireland and its adjacent areas by promoting, undertaking and co-operating in research and gathering and sharing information on these topics.

(3) The advancement of citizenship through volunteering linked to natural heritage including the promotion of sustainable food production and sustainable lifestyles.

(4) The advancement of the arts, culture, heritage and science linked to natural heritage through events and project-based action.

(5) The advancement of health and well-being through activities linked to the natural environment.

Scarce crimson & gold moth © Adam Mantell

Key Policies & Processes

Managing Risk

Ulster Wildlife Trustees are responsible for overseeing risk management by the charity. They are responsible for ensuring that Ulster Wildlife has an effective system of internal control, management and audit to enable the charity to take advantage of opportunities whilst ensuring that the charity remains protected.

Risk management is well established and is considered in every aspect of our work. We have an active risk management process in place to make sure that appropriate risk assessments are completed and controls are in place to manage and mitigate risk across the organisation.

The Board of Trustees and Senior Management Team work together to ensure that risk is very carefully assessed in relation to the health, welfare, and security of staff, volunteers and the public. As such health & safety risk management is supported by an external consultant.

Risks are also reviewed in the broadest sense and anything that might alter or impact on the charity's ability to fulfil its charitable objectives is considered.

Processes include:

- Risk assessments are completed by all staff to identify, evaluate and manage risks.
- Health & Safety management system including phone app is used to facilitate management and record key information.
- Risk register with mitigation actions is reviewed at least quarterly by the Board.
- Health & Safety is a key factor in selecting external contractors and Health & Safety obligations are included in awarded external contracts.
- Comprehensive risk management reviews are carried out once a year by all subcommittees and are reported to the Board Meeting.
- Multi-year planning, with targets that are linked to delivery of organisational strategy.
- 'Value for Money' principles guide when and where we source goods and services.
- Annual external audit.

The most significant risks identified in 2022/23 were:

- The impacts of climate change on the environment, economy, and people.
- The cost of living crisis and its continued impact on fundraising and running costs for the organisation.
- Staff retention and recruitment.

The cost of living crisis has affected our ability to fundraise and our membership income did decrease slightly this year. A membership growth plan and associated staffing structure, similar to pre-covid levels, has been put into place in an effort to return to membership growth over the coming years. Similarly, the running costs for the charity increased significantly during the year.

Staff turnover was higher than usual during the year due to funding uncertainties and projects ending. This will remain a key issue for the charity to manage particularly with delays in agreement of government funding due to the lack of an Executive in Northern Ireland.

The most significant risks identified for 2023/24 are:

- The cost of living crisis and its continued impact on fundraising.
- Impact of inflationary pressures on running costs.
- Staff retention and recruitment.
- Delays in agreement of funding due to lack of NI Executive in place.

Bumblebee on devil's bit scabious, Slieve Donard Nature Reserve © Ronald Surgenor



Red squirrel © Mark Hamblin 2020 Vision

Our Promise to Our Supporters

At Ulster Wildlife our members, supporters and funders are at the heart of everything we do to help wildlife and wild places thrive in Northern Ireland. That is why, as a registered charity (NIC101848), we are part of the Fundraising Regulator's self-regulatory scheme.

As members of the scheme, we follow the Institute of Fundraising's Codes of Fundraising Practice and comply with the key principles embodied in the Codes. This means when supporters make a donation to us they can be assured that our fundraising is legal, open, honest and respectful.



Our Fundraising Promise

- We are committed to high standards.
- We do all we can to ensure that staff, fundraisers, volunteers and fundraising contractors working with us to raise funds comply with the Code and with this Promise.
- We comply with the law including those that apply to data protection, health and safety and the environment.
- We are honest and open. We tell the truth and do not exaggerate; we do what we say we are going to do.
- We answer all reasonable questions about our fundraising activities and costs.

We are clear

- We are clear about who we are, what we do and how donations are used.
- Where we have a promotional agreement with a commercial company, we make clear how much of the purchase price we receive.
- We give a clear explanation of how a donation can be made and how to amend a regular commitment.

We are respectful

- We respect the rights, dignities and privacy of our supporters and beneficiaries.
- We will not put undue pressure on anyone to make a gift, and if a person does not want to give or wishes to cease giving we will respect that decision.
- If someone tells us that they don't want us to contact them in a particular way we will not do so – our Privacy Notice for Members and Supporters is available on our website at ulsterwildlife.org/privacy-notice

We are accountable

- If anyone is unhappy with anything we have done whilst fundraising, they can contact us to make a complaint at complaints@ulsterwildlife.org. For further information, read our complaints policy.
- If we cannot resolve a complaint, we accept the authority of the Fundraising Regulator to make a final adjudication.

Equal Opportunities and Diversity

Ulster Wildlife aims to be an employer of choice, for people from different backgrounds, and through our Equality in the Workplace policy we promote respect for the individual and equality of opportunity.

Our aim is for our workforce to be truly representative of all sections of the wider community and for each employee to feel respected and able to give their best. Within Ulster Wildlife there is respect for promotion and protection of each individual's human rights. Ulster Wildlife promotes being at ease with all aspects of diversity, built on fairness and respect for all. Decisions about recruitment and selection, promotion, training or any other benefit are made objectively and without unlawful discrimination.

Our Equality in the Workplace policy helps all those who work for us to develop their full potential and ensure that the talents and resources of the workforce are utilised to fully maximise the efficiency of the organisation.

Sustainability

We have set a target to achieve net zero emissions by 2030 and we take sustainability very seriously. We have already commenced the net zero journey, which will be an integral part of our organisational and project planning. All electricity used is renewable and we are in the process of phasing in EVs as budget allows. During the project development phase for new projects, carbon footprint and location of project staff is considered to minimise carbon footprint as by the nature of our work, nature restoration is dispersed throughout Northern Ireland.

A priority for Northern Ireland in terms of the regional carbon budget is to restore damaged peatland and this is a significant delivery strand for the charity. During the year, we purchased a peatland site in Co Tyrone which has been cutover for commercial peat extraction and we are in the process of designing restoration plans for the site, which will be implemented during the next two to three years.

Wider network

Ulster Wildlife is part of a collective of 46 Wildlife Trusts, represented nationally by The Royal Society for Wildlife Trusts (RSWT). The Wildlife Trusts collectively act together, where appropriate, in key policy areas and campaigns.

Financial Management

Financial Reserves Policy

The Trustees recognise there is a balance to be achieved between delivering our charitable objectives and managing the actual and potential risks of failing to meet our liabilities when they fall due. Consequently, the Trustees plan to hold a level of unrestricted financial reserves to provide the necessary resilience to manage these risks.

These risks include, amongst others:

- Loss of funding sources
- Funding delays
- Costs associated with unforeseen closure

The Trustees, having assessed the likelihood of these risks occurring, consider that an unrestricted financial reserve level (excluding designated funds) equal to six months unrestricted payroll and support costs and potential winding up costs should be targeted. The balance on unrestricted reserves as at 31 March 2023, net of unrestricted fixed assets is £642k which meets our target.

Designated Funds

In addition to the above, the Trustees have designated certain unrestricted funds as the 'Fund for the Future'. This money is earmarked to help further the charity's strategic objectives, including the acquisition of nature reserves.

Monitoring and Reviewing

Financial reserve levels are monitored on a quarterly basis throughout the year as a standing item on the Finance Committee's agenda. They also form a part of the finance pack presented to the Board on a quarterly basis.



Razorbill at Isle of Muck Nature Reserve © Ronald Surgenor

Advisors, Senior Personnel and Administrative Details

Auditors	DNT Chartered Accountants Ormeau House 91-97 Ormeau Road Belfast BT7 1SH
Bankers	Danske Bank Belfast Finance Centre PO Box 183 Donegall Square West Belfast BT1 6JS
Company Secretary	Catherine Thompson
Senior Leadership Team	Jennifer Fulton - Chief Executive Officer Dawn Miskelly - Director of Development & Engagement Peter McEvoy - Director of Land Management Niamh Hart - Head of Finance
Charity Registration Number	NIC 101848
Company Registration Number	NI12711
Registered Office and Operational Address	McClelland House 10 Heron Road Belfast BT3 9LE

Independent Auditors' Report to the Members of the Ulster Wildlife Trust

Opinion

We have audited the charity financial statements of Ulster Wildlife Trust ('the charity') for the financial year ended 31 March 2023 which comprise the Statement of Financial Activities (incorporating an Income and Expenditure Account), the Balance Sheet, the Statement of Cash Flows and notes to the financial statements, including the summary of significant accounting policies set out in note 2. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including FRS 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland" and Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with FRS 102.

In our opinion when reporting in accordance with a fair presentation framework the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the charity's affairs as at 31 March 2023 and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice;
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the charity in accordance with ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled

our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the charity's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from the date when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the trustees with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

Other information

The other information comprises the information included in the annual report other than the financial statements and our Auditor's Report thereon. The trustees are responsible for the other information contained within the annual report. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

Our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the course of the audit, or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether this gives rise to a material

misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact. We have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinion on other matter prescribed by the Companies Act 2006

In our opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit:

- the information given in the Trustees Annual Report for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements; and
- the Trustees Annual Report has been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

In the light of the knowledge and understanding of the charity and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified material misstatements in the Trustees Annual Report.

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the Companies Act 2006 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept; or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- certain disclosures of trustees' remuneration specified by law are not made.



Independent Auditors' Report to the Members of the Ulster Wildlife Trust

Responsibilities of trustees for the financial statements

As explained more fully in the Statement of Trustees' Responsibilities, the trustees are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as they determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the trustees are responsible for assessing the charity's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless management either intends to liquidate the charity or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an Auditor's Report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We design procedures in line with our responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of irregularities, including fraud. The extent to which our procedures are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud is detailed below:

Our approach to identifying and assessing the risks of material

misstatement in respect of irregularities, including fraud and non compliance with laws and regulations, was as follows:

- The engagement partner ensured that the engagement team collectively had the appropriate competence, capabilities and skills to identify or recognise non-compliance with applicable laws and regulations;
- We identified the laws and regulations applicable to the company through discussions with directors and other management,
- We focused on specific laws and regulations which we considered may have a direct material effect on the financial statements or the operations of the company,

To address the risk of fraud through management bias and override of controls, we:

- Performed analytical procedures to identify any unusual or unexpected relationships;
- Investigated the rationale behind significant or unusual transactions.

In response to the risk of irregularities and non-compliance with laws and regulations, we designed procedures which included, but were not limited to:

- Agreeing financial statement disclosures to underlying supporting documentation;
- Reading the minutes of meetings of those charged with governance;
- Enquiring of management as to actual and potential litigation and claims;
- Reviewing correspondence with HMRC, Companies House and the company's legal advisors.

Greater butterfly orchid, Slieve Donard Nature Reserve © Ronald Surgenor



Independent Auditors' Report to the Members of the Ulster Wildlife Trust

Further information regarding the scope of our responsibilities as auditor

As part of an audit in accordance with ISAs (UK), we exercise professional judgement and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. We also:

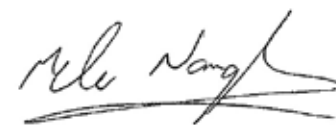
- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the charity's internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by trustees.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of the trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the charity's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our Auditor's Report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our Auditor's Report. However, future events or conditions may cause the charity to cease to continue as a going concern.

- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

The purpose of our audit work and to whom we owe our responsibilities

This report is made solely to the charity's members, as a body, in accordance with Chapter 3 of Part 16 of the Companies Act 2006. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charity's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charity and the charity's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.



Mr M Nangle (Senior Statutory Auditor) for and on behalf of **DNTCA Limited, Ormeau House, 91-97 Ormeau Road, Belfast, BT7 1SH.**

Six-spot burnet moth, Slieve Donard Nature Reserve © Ronald Surgenor

Statement of Financial Activities (including income and expenditure account) for the year ended 31 March 2023

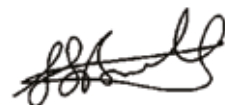
	Notes	Unrestricted Fund £	Restricted Fund £	2023 Total Funds £	2022 Total Funds £
INCOME FROM:					
Donations & Legacies	3	452,709	72,647	525,356	538,105
Conservation Activities	4	-	1,918,730	1,918,730	2,178,277
Agri-environment Payments		28,242	-	28,242	29,034
Charitable Activities - Landfill Contributions	5	-	227,085	227,085	337,392
Education & Training Activities	6	-	313,655	313,655	313,680
Interest Received	7	3,971	2,901	6,872	2,984
Other Income	8	176,818	41,880	218,698	247,950
TOTAL INCOME		661,740	2,576,898	3,238,638	3,647,422
EXPENDITURE ON					
Raising Funds	9	80,453	-	80,453	90,732
Charitable Activities	10	780,520	1,853,219	2,633,739	2,897,091
TOTAL EXPENDITURE		860,973	1,853,219	2,714,192	2,987,823
NET INCOME BEFORE TRANSFERS AND FOREIGN EXCHANGE					
		(199,233)	723,679	524,446	659,599
Gains/(losses) from Foreign Exchange		(871)	-	(871)	(5,237)
Transfers Between Funds	14	223,262	(223,262)	-	-
NET MOVEMENT IN FUNDS		23,158	500,417	523,575	654,362
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS:					
Total Funds at 1 April 2022		1,178,771	1,485,935	2,664,706	2,010,344
Transfer (from)/to Designated Fund for the Future		(3,192)	3,192	-	-
TOTAL FUNDS AT 31 MARCH 2023		1,198,737	1,989,544	3,188,281	2,664,706

The notes on pages 40 to 43 form part of these financial statements.
The Statement of financial activities includes all gains and losses in the year.
All income and expenditure derives from continuing activities.

Statement of Financial Position at 31 March 2023

	Notes	Unrestricted Fund £	Restricted Fund £	2023 Total Funds £	2022 Total Funds £
FIXED ASSETS					
Tangible Assets	16	325,038	1,501,703	1,826,741	1,670,011
CURRENT ASSETS					
Debtors	17	104,934	121,872	226,806	717,915
Cash at Bank and in Hand		928,421	1,148,467	2,076,888	1,703,260
		1,033,355	1,270,339	2,303,694	2,421,175
CURRENT LIABILITIES					
Creditors	18	151,549	439,682	591,231	1,074,551
NET CURRENT ASSETS		881,806	830,657	1,712,463	1,346,624
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES		1,206,844	2,332,360	3,539,204	3,016,635
CREDITORS due in more than 1 year					
Capital Grants	19	8,107	342,816	350,923	351,929
		1,198,737	1,989,544	3,188,281	2,664,706
FINANCIAL RESERVES					
General Fund	20	989,251	-	989,251	988,414
Fund for the Future	22	209,486	-	209,486	190,357
Restricted Funds	21	-	1,989,544	1,989,544	1,485,935
		1,198,737	1,989,544	3,188,281	2,664,706

These financial statements were approved and signed by the members of the board and authorised for issue on 31st August 2023



Ken Brundle, Chairman



David Hendron, Honorary Treasurer

The notes on pages 40 to 43 form part of these financial statements.
Company Registration Number: NI 12711

Statement of Cash Flows for year ending 31 March 2023

	2023	2022
	£	£
Cash Flows from operating activities		
Net Income/(Expenditure)	524,446	659,599
<i>Adjustments for</i>		
Depreciation of Tangible Fixed Assets	25,982	7,995
Increase/(Decrease) in Deferred Capital Grant	(1,006)	(1,006)
(Increase)/Decrease in Trade and Other Debtors	491,109	(383,485)
Increase/(Decrease) in Trade and Other Creditors	(483,320)	837,627
Net Cash (used in)/from Operating Activities	557,211	1,120,730
Cash Flows from Investing Activities		
Purchase of Tangible Assets	(187,508)	(801,065)
Disposal of Tangible Assets	4,796	20,961
Net Cash used in Investing Activities	(182,712)	(780,104)
Net Increase /(Decrease) in Cash and Cash Equivalents	374,499	340,626
Cash and Cash Equivalents at Beginning of the Year	1,703,260	1,367,871
Net Increase/(Decrease) in Cash and Cash Equivalents due to Exchange Rate Movements	(871)	(5,237)
Cash and Cash Equivalents at End of the Year	2,076,888	1,703,260

Notes to the accounts

1 Statement of Compliance

These financial statements have been prepared in compliance with FRS102, 'The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and the Republic of Ireland', 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 (Charities SORP (FRS102)) and the Charities Act 2008.

2 Accounting Policies

Basis of preparation

The financial statements have been prepared on the historical cost basis, as modified by the revaluation of certain financial assets and liabilities measured at fair value through income or expenditure.

The financial statements are prepared in sterling, which is the functional currency of the entity.

Going concern

There are no material uncertainties about the charity's ability to continue.

Fund accounting

Unrestricted funds are available for use, at the discretion of the trustees, to further any of the charity's purposes.

Restricted funds are subject to restrictions on their expenditure declared by the donor or funder or through the terms of an appeal.

Incoming resources

All incoming resources are included in the statement of financial activities when entitlement has passed to the charity; it is probable that the economic benefits associated with the transaction will flow to the charity and the amount can be reliably measured. The following specific policies are applied to particular categories of income:

- income from donations or grants is recognised when there is evidence of entitlement to the gift, receipt is probable and its amount can be measured reliably.
- legacy income is recognised when receipt is probable and entitlement is established.
- income from contracts for the supply of services is recognised with the delivery of the contracted service.

These are classified as unrestricted funds unless there is a contractual requirement for it to be spent on a particular purpose and returned if unspent, in which case it is regarded as restricted.

Resources expended

Expenditure is recognised on an accruals basis as a liability is incurred. Expenditure is classified under headings of the statement of financial activities to which it relates:

- expenditure on raising funds includes the costs of all fundraising activities.

- expenditure on charitable activities includes all costs incurred by the charity in undertaking activities that further its charitable aims for the benefit of its beneficiaries, including those support costs and costs relating to the governance of the charity.

All costs are allocated to expenditure categories reflecting the use of the resource. Direct costs attributable to a single activity are allocated directly to that activity. Shared costs are apportioned between the activities they contribute to on a reasonable, justifiable and consistent basis.

Depreciation

Purchased assets, which individually exceed £1000 at cost are included in the balance sheet at historic cost less depreciation and any impairment in accordance with FRS 102.

Fixed Assets are depreciated over the period of their useful lives as follows:

Land	not depreciated
Buildings	2.5% straight-line
Equipment	10% straight line
Computers	25% straight line
Vehicles - cars and vans	15% straight line

Depreciation for specialist conservation equipment with limited resale value would normally be depreciated over the lifetime of the project in which they are used.

Grants

Government and other grants are recognised at the fair value of the asset received or receivable. Grants are not recognised until there is reasonable assurance that the charity will comply with the conditions attaching to them and the grants will be received.

Foreign currency

Transactions in foreign currencies are translated at rates prevailing at the date of the transaction.

Pensions

Ulster Wildlife operates a defined contribution pension scheme and matches employee contributions to the scheme at a maximum rate of 7% of salary.

Taxation

The organisation is a registered charity with HMRC and is therefore not liable for taxation to the extent that any surplus or gains arising are wholly applied to its charitable objects.

The company is registered for VAT. Much of the income is either exempt or outside the scope of VAT.

Consequently, it is not possible to recover most of the VAT incurred on expenditure. Income and expenditure are shown exclusive of recoverable VAT.

Notes to the accounts

3 Donations & Legacies

	Unrestricted Funds 2023 £	Restricted Funds 2023 £	Unrestricted Funds 2022 £	Restricted Funds 2022 £
Legacy & In Memory Giving	3,320	-	61,166	-
Membership Contributions inc. Gift Aid	416,757	-	420,319	-
Corporate Support	26,491	58,500	7,500	10,000
Other Gifts & Donations	6,141	14,147	28,919	10,201
	452,709	72,647	517,904	20,201

4 Conservation Grants

	Unrestricted Funds 2023 £	Restricted Funds 2023 £	Unrestricted Funds 2022 £	Restricted Funds 2022 £
DAERA Environment Fund	-	1,092,606	-	1,257,842
DAERA Maritime and Fisheries Fund	-	47,625	-	-
Department for Infrastructure Living Places and Spaces Fund	-	10,000	-	-
Environmental Farming Scheme	-	231,641	-	195,673
Esmée Fairbairn Foundation	-	103,250	-	150,000
EU- Interreg VA	-	247,531	-	410,941
Garfield Weston Foundation	-	30,000	-	30,000
Kreitman Foundation	-	11,600	-	15,000
Landfill Communities Fund	-	2,167	-	4,419
Marine Institute	-	1,623	-	1,617
Ministry of Defence	-	14,249	-	17,684
National Lottery Heritage Fund	-	116,438	-	92,307
Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts	-	10,000	-	-
Save Our Seas Foundation	-	-	-	2,794
	-	1,918,730	-	2,178,277

5 Landfill Environmental Projects

	Unrestricted Funds 2023 £	Restricted Funds 2023 £	Unrestricted Funds 2022 £	Restricted Funds 2022 £
Landfill Contributions Received	-	227,085	-	337,392
	-	227,085	-	337,392
Expenditure				
Entrust Administration Fee	-	8,084	-	9,818
Direct Project Expenditure	-	276,178	-	238,944
Direct Costs	20,166	-	30,490	-
	20,166	284,262	30,490	248,762

Notes to the accounts

6 Education & Training Grants

	Unrestricted Funds 2023 £	Restricted Funds 2023 £	Unrestricted Funds 2022 £	Restricted Funds 2022 £
DAERA Environment Fund	-	-	-	35,744
Department for Communities (JobStart Scheme)	-	60,471	-	12,012
Department for Communities (Covid Recovery Employment and Skills Initiative for Heritage)	-	44,249	-	-
Education Authority	-	7,445	-	31,332
European Solidarity Corps	-	13,201	-	-
National Lottery Community Fund (Our Environment, Our Future)	-	22,768	-	74,124
National Lottery Community Fund (People & Communities)	-	74,761	-	60,263
National Lottery Community Fund (Empowering Young People 3)	-	61,282	-	31,226
National Lottery Heritage Fund	-	29,478	-	58,829
Other	-	-	150	10,000
	-	313,655	150	313,530

7 Interest Received

Interest received in Restricted Funds is the interest earned on landfill tax receipts held prior to disbursement, and interest received which is used to fund expenditure on nature reserves. Interest received in unrestricted funds is bank interest earned on other cash balances.

8 Other Income

	Unrestricted Funds 2023 £	Restricted Funds 2023 £	Unrestricted Funds 2022 £	Restricted Funds 2022 £
Esmée Fairbairn Foundation Core Funding	110,000	-	75,000	-
Consultancy	20,198	-	34,495	63,891
Furlough Income	-	-	7,312	-
Sundry income	46,620	41,880	42,281	24,971
	176,818	41,880	159,088	88,862

9 Expenditure on Raising Donations & Legacies

	Unrestricted Funds 2023 £	Restricted Funds 2023 £	Unrestricted Funds 2022 £	Restricted Funds 2022 £
Travel	62	-	-	-
Professional Fees	92	-	-	-
Printed Materials, Misc	14,338	-	10,369	-
Wages & Salary Costs	65,961	-	80,363	-
	80,453	-	90,732	-

Notes to the accounts

10 Charitable Activities

	Unrestricted Funds 2023 £	Restricted Funds 2023 £	Total Funds 2023 £	Total Funds 2022 £
Landfill Environmental Projects	20,167	284,262	304,429	279,252
Nature Conservation	227,489	1,355,435	1,582,924	1,912,891
Environmental Education & Training	73,714	158,128	231,842	285,336
Membership Support Costs	106,115	-	106,115	75,251
Organisation Support Costs	325,698	43,965	369,663	307,847
Depreciation	17,503	12,270	29,773	24,791
Bank Interest & Charges	5,109	-	5,109	4,784
Auditors Remuneration	4,725	-	4,725	3,780
(Profit)/Loss on Disposal of Fixed Asset	-	(841)	(841)	3,159
	780,520	1,853,219	2,633,739	2,897,091

11 Expenditure on Charitable Activities

	Staff Costs £	Other direct costs £	2023 £	2022 £
Landfill Environmental Projects	16,130	288,298	304,428	279,252
Nature Conservation	678,958	903,966	1,582,924	1,912,891
Environmental Education	203,329	28,514	231,843	285,336
Membership Support Costs	46,042	60,073	106,115	75,251
Organisation Support Costs	192,359	177,304	369,663	307,847
Other- Depreciation, Bank Charges, Audit.	-	38,766	38,766	36,514
	1,136,818	1,496,921	2,633,739	2,897,091

Other Direct costs Environmental Projects	Landfill Environmental Projects £	Nature Conservation Projects £	Environmental Education Projects £	Membership & Organisation Support Costs £	Total £
Direct Project Costs	284,262	114,056	15,490	15,373	429,181
Premises Costs	4,036	24,433	1,280	115,701	145,450
Postage, Printing & Stationery	-	3,869	522	41,385	45,776
Staff Travel and Vehicle Costs	-	63,060	2,146	15,125	80,331
Contracted Services	-	666,125	2,440	15,713	684,278
Staff Training	-	16,847	4,210	2,316	23,373
Council Costs	-	-	-	4,281	4,281
Information Technology	-	15,576	2,426	27,483	45,485
	288,298	903,966	28,514	237,377	1,458,155

Notes to the accounts

12 Depreciation

	Unrestricted Funds 2023 £	Restricted Funds 2023 £	Unrestricted Funds 2022 £	Restricted Funds 2022 £
Motor Vehicles	3,499	12,270	3,499	6,499
Equipment	5,759	-	6,548	-
Buildings	8,245	-	8,245	-
	17,503	12,270	18,292	6,499

13 Staff Costs

	2023 £	2022 £
Salaries and Wages	1,044,198	1,033,452
Social Security Costs	93,964	91,548
Pension Contributions	64,617	73,321
	1,202,779	1,198,321

One employee received emoluments of more than £60,000. The average number of employees during the year, calculated on the basis of full time equivalents, was 33.6. (2022- 36.5).

The key management personnel comprise the trustees and the members of the senior management team.

The total employee benefits of the key management personnel was £287,960. (2022: £271,838).

14 Transfer Between Funds

	2023 £	2022 £
Landfill Fund Administration Costs	20,166	30,490
Project Contribution to Organisation Support Costs	213,101	160,530
Conservation Work at Glendun	-	2,107
Match Funding for DAERA Funding	(10,005)	(20,733)
	223,262	172,394

15 Board Remuneration and Related Party Transactions

Helen Surgenor was appointed to the Board in the year to 31 March 2022. She is the spouse of a current staff member.

No members of the Board received any remuneration during the year in their capacity as Trustees.

No travel and subsistence costs were paid on behalf of trustees during the year. (2022 £NIL).

No travel and subsistence costs were paid to trustees during the year. (2022 £NIL).

No trustees received payment for professional services supplied to the charity (2022 £NIL).

No balances are owed to trustees at 31st March 2023.

Notes to the accounts

16 Fixed Assets

	Nature Reserves £	Land & Buildings £	Motor Vehicles £	Equipment & Computers £	TOTAL £
COST OR VALUATION					
At 1 April 2022	1,161,966	589,355	149,464	76,674	1,977,459
Additions	78,192	-	22,399	86,917	187,508
Disposals	-	-	-	(4,796)	(4,796)
At 31 March 2023	1,240,158	589,355	171,863	158,795	2,160,171
DEPRECIATION					
At 1 April 2022	-	165,285	83,613	58,550	307,448
Charge for year	-	8,245	16,774	5,759	30,778
Disposals	-	-	-	(4,796)	(4,796)
At 31 March 2023	-	173,530	100,387	59,513	333,430
NBV at 31 March 2023	1,240,158	415,825	71,476	99,282	1,826,741
<i>including restricted assets of</i>	<i>1,200,158</i>	<i>150,000</i>	<i>64,628</i>	<i>86,917</i>	<i>1,501,703</i>

Glendun farm has been included at probate value of £150,000.

17 Debtors

	Unrestricted Funds 2023 £	Restricted Funds 2023 £	Unrestricted Funds 2022 £	Restricted Funds 2022 £
Debtors and Prepayments	85,958	73,530	68,901	10,349
Grants	-	48,342	118,405	499,575
Tax Refunds Due	18,976	-	20,685	-
	104,934	121,872	207,991	509,924

18 Creditors Falling Due Within One Year

	Unrestricted Funds 2023 £	Restricted Funds 2023 £	Unrestricted Funds 2022 £	Restricted Funds 2022 £
<i>Sundry Creditors and Accrued Expenditure</i>	<i>151,549</i>	<i>439,682</i>	<i>77,373</i>	<i>997,178</i>

A specific provision has been created in the year of £60k for roof repairs identified as necessary at McClelland House.

19 Creditors Falling Due After More Than One Year

	Unrestricted Funds 2023 £	Restricted Funds 2023 £	Unrestricted Funds 2022 £	Restricted Funds 2022 £
<i>Capital Grants</i>	<i>8,107</i>	<i>342,816</i>	<i>9,113</i>	<i>342,816</i>

Notes to the accounts

20 Movement on Unrestricted Funds

	Unrestricted Funds 2023 £	Unrestricted Funds 2022 £
Opening Balance	988,414	942,333
Surplus for the Year	23,158	127,247
Transfer to Fund for the Future	(22,321)	(81,166)
Closing Balance	989,251	988,414

21 Movement on Restricted Funds

	Restricted Funds 2023 £	Restricted Funds 2022 £
Opening Balance	1,485,935	790,226
Net Income/(Expenditure) for the year	500,417	527,115
Transfer from/(to) Fund for the Future	3,192	168,594
Closing Balance	1,989,544	1,485,935

Some funders pay in advance and other funders issue payment only after the expenditure has been incurred. The movement on restricted funds in any year is a result of timing differences between receipts of grants for restricted projects and the related expenditure.

22 Movement on Fund for the Future

	Designated Fund for the Future 2023 £	Designated Fund for the Future 2022 £
Opening Balance	190,357	277,785
Income from Donations and Legacies	22,321	81,166
UW Contribution to the Purchase of Land	(3,192)	(168,594)
Closing Balance	209,486	190,357

Fund for the Future includes monies from gifts in wills and legacy donations and other donations, including restricted donations. It will be used to purchase and manage nature reserves, protect key species as well as educate and support future wildlife champions.

23 Contingent Liability

A portion of grants received may become repayable if the charity fails to comply with the terms of the relevant letters of offer.

24 Taxation

As a charity, Ulster Wildlife Trust is exempt from tax on income and gains to the extent that these are applied to its charitable objects. Ulster Wildlife is registered for VAT in relation to some specific taxable supplies. The net amount payable on taxable supplies was £13,496 in the period (2022 £13,750).

25 Company Status

Ulster Wildlife Trust Limited is a private company limited by guarantee and consequently does not have share capital. Each of the members is liable to contribute an amount not exceeding £1 towards the assets of the company in the event of liquidation.



School children at the launch of Glenam native oyster nursery



Ulster Wildlife is Northern Ireland's largest local nature conservation charity. We are working to bring nature back across Northern Ireland and secure a wilder future where people and nature are thriving together.

Join us now and together we can make a real difference
www.ulsterwildlife.org/join-us

Get in touch

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- 📷 instagram.com/ulsterwildlife
- 🌐 linkedin.com/company/ulster-wildlife

We are proud to be one of **46 independent Wildlife Trusts** working across the UK

part of



Ulster Wildlife Trust, (operating as Ulster Wildlife) is registered with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland NIC101848 and is a not-for-profit company incorporated in Northern Ireland, limited by guarantee NI 12711.

Ulster Wildlife Trust

Northern Ireland - Charity number 101848

Annual report

Our Year for Nature, People and Climate

Ulster Wildlife Trust

**Annual Report &
Accounts 22-23**



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Foreword

During 2022-23, as a charity, we have overcome great challenges to produce extremely positive results for nature, people and climate.

With the introduction of our bold new strategy to 2030 to tackle the nature and climate crises and meet local, regional and international targets, our top priority has been to explore new and innovative ways to scale up our work for nature's recovery, taking a lead from international best practice and research. From launching our second native oyster nursery at Glenarm and purchasing a peatland restoration demonstration site in Co. Tyrone to securing long-term funding from DAERA to scale up peatland restoration in Northern Ireland – we have started to lay the groundwork for achieving our ambition. This work also allows us to showcase, educate and collaborate on the benefits of nature-based solutions and the role our natural habitats can play in addressing climate change, and benefitting people's health and wellbeing.

Our work to bring wildlife back gained momentum as we celebrated a successful breeding year for our most iconic farmland bird the barn owl, played a role in introducing red squirrels to Castle Ward Estate, and conducted research showing the phenomenal expansion of pine martens across Northern Ireland. These 'good news' stories received widespread media coverage and captured people's hearts and minds, helping to raise our profile and grow our supporter base – more essential than ever if we are to make a real difference.

Despite another turbulent year for politics, our campaigning and advocacy work witnessed several notable successes including the historic passing of Northern Ireland's Climate Change Act, thanks to campaigning by our supporters and fellow environmental charities. We also responded to a procession of consultations and key threats affecting nature, most notably the UK Retained EU Law Bill.

Mobilising and empowering communities to take meaningful action for nature and climate was lifted to new heights with the launch of the 'Nextdoor Nature' project in south and east Belfast. Our Youth Forum also continues to grow from strength to strength with public engagement campaigns such as 'Let Nature In' helping us achieve our goal of one in four people taking action for nature.

Of course, none of this work would be possible without the dedication and unstinting efforts of the staff and volunteer team, and our skilled Board Members along with the continued and vital support from our loyal members, supporters, businesses, partners, and funders.

Thank you!



Jennifer Fulton

Jennifer Fulton
Chief Executive Officer of Ulster Wildlife



Ken Brundle

Ken Brundle
Chair of Ulster Wildlife

Highlights of our year for wildlife



© Ronald Surgenor

April 22

Launched new Strategy to 2030 to 'bring nature back'

Nature is in crisis and declining at rates unprecedented in human history. Our new strategy for a wilder future by 2030 sets out our vision of a thriving natural world with nature in recovery, where everyone is inspired to get involved, and where wildlife plays a key role in addressing the nature and climate emergencies. Together, and with the support of local communities, businesses, farmers, landowners and our members who stand with us, we are in the best place possible to turn our vision into a reality – and ensure the recovery of our natural world. Read our strategy: ulsterwildlife.org/publications



May 22

Nextdoor Nature launched to empower local communities to help nature flourish

Thanks to funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Nextdoor Nature is bringing people together in south and east Belfast to help nature flourish. We are supporting communities to put their ideas into action and make small changes on their doorsteps that will help put nature into recovery. Micro-projects are being brought to life in places where green spaces and access to nature have eroded over time, driven by galvanised communities who are finding a new passion for wildlife.



June 22

Climate Change Act becomes law

After years of campaigning with other environmental organisations, our Youth Forum, the public, and with support from our members, Northern Ireland finally has a Climate Change Act. This was a historic moment – just over two years after the Assembly declared a 'Climate Emergency' – and is the first-ever legislation in Northern Ireland to drive forward action to tackle the climate and nature crises. The Act includes a target of net-zero by 2050, 'Just Transition' principles including a fund to support agriculture, a nature-based solutions amendment, and provision for a Climate Commissioner.



© Scottish Shark Tagging Programme

July 22

Four years of shark conservation celebrated

Our four-year project to safeguard the future of endangered sharks, skates and rays (elasmobranchs) ended with some fantastic achievements. We trained and supported dedicated anglers to become tagging champions. We also trained 80 anglers in best practice handling techniques with over 640 shark, skates, and rays tagged and recorded. This tagging data, alongside over 4,000 eggcase records submitted by the public, provides vital information needed to protect important elasmobranch nursery and pupping grounds.



© Philip McErlean

August 22

Record lizard sightings at Slievenacloy Nature Reserve

Our Slievenacloy Nature Reserve, in the Belfast Hills, is the perfect hotspot for the common lizard – Ireland's only native reptile – where it can be seen basking on old fence posts, paths and rocks on warm days. Last summer, lizard surveyor Philip McErlean, spotted a total of 48 common lizards – 18 adults and 30 neonates – a record for one day.



© Jon Hawkins Surrey Hills Photography

September 22

New online sightings portal goes live

We launched a new online recording facility so that the public can submit their sightings of red squirrel, barn owl, and pine marten – three key Northern Ireland priority species we are focusing our conservation efforts on to help reverse their fortunes. Sightings of these three key species, along with grey squirrels and long-eared owls, will help us build a better picture of their distribution across Northern Ireland, so we can target our work more effectively. Record your sightings: ulsterwildlife.org/record-sightings

Highlights of our year for wildlife



© Ronald Sargenor

October 22

Turning the tide to save the Irish Sea

We joined forces with other conservation bodies in the Irish Sea region to find solutions to the challenges nature is facing across the Irish Sea. The Irish Sea is incredibly rich in wildlife but heavily used with limited protection and proper management. Together, we produced a Review of the Irish Sea 2022 which laid down our vision and calls to action to protect and improve its health. We want to see collaboration across national borders to achieve a well-managed and ecologically coherent network of Marine Protected Areas and truly sustainable fisheries.



© Mark Hamblin 2020 VISION

November 22

Defend Nature campaign launched

The introduction of the proposed Retained EU Law Bill, which could see vital pieces of environmental legislation of EU-origin scrapped, required a rapid response to ensure decades of wins for wildlife and wild places were not lost. We joined forces with fellow environmental charities to send a joint letter to NI Ministers as well as engaging with key local politicians to speak out against this Bill. We also worked with The Wildlife Trusts to mobilise public support in the form of letters and a postcard campaign to MP constituency offices.



© Ronald Sargenor

December 22

Launch of annual appeal for seabird conservation

To help match-fund the purchase of a new boat for our seabird conservation on our Isle of Muck Nature Reserve, off Islandmagee, we appealed to our members and supporters to raise £5,000. This natural treasure is home to the third largest colony of cliff nesting seabirds in Northern Ireland, from razorbills to kittiwakes. Owning our own vessel enables us to step-up essential conservation work when it's needed the most, respond to incidents quickly, and undertake more regular seabird monitoring. We were thrilled to raise over £10,000, thanks to our supporters. 'Tystie' made its maiden voyage in February with the additional funds raised helping to purchase essential boat equipment.



© Adam Gerrard

January 23

Red squirrel release at Castle Ward sparks hope for iconic mammal

Four red squirrels were successfully introduced to Castle Ward estate, outside Strangford, in a bid to establish a new population of this key native species. The introduction was part of an ongoing effort between the National Trust, Ulster Wildlife, Belfast Zoo, Northern Ireland Environment Agency and the Heart of Down Red Squirrel Group to secure the long-term future of this iconic mammal. The location was carefully chosen as it has ample woodland habitat and, most importantly, it is free from invasive grey squirrels – the biggest threat to the red squirrels' survival.



© Giles Knight

February 23

Collaboration with farmers in Leitrim

Our Fermanagh Environmental Farming Scheme Group collaborated with Leitrim Sustainable Agriculture Group including a series of reciprocal farm visits. This helped improve understanding of the importance and challenges of farming wet species-rich grasslands that deliver for nature and are unique to this border region. The collaboration also resulted in good sharing of ideas and joint bids for Shared Island funding of which we await the outcome.



March 23

Positive breeding year celebrated for barn owls

One of our most vulnerable farmland birds, the barn owl, had a positive breeding year in 2022. Twenty-four barn owl chicks fledged from eight known breeding pairs – a significant increase in chicks from 2021. Two new nest sites were also discovered in Co Down helping to boost the bird's fragile population, which is estimated to be less than 30 breeding pairs. Barn owls were badly hit in 2021, as the wet spring and hot summer resulted in a poor breeding season, so this is welcome news for our struggling population. Read the 2022 barn owl report: ulsterwildlife.org/barn-owls



Small heath butterfly at Slievenacloy Nature Reserve © Ronald Surgenor

Bringing nature back

Our new strategy to put nature into recovery by 2030 has ambitious goals and builds upon our work over the last 45 years to deliver impactful change for nature. It drives us towards our vision of a wilder future, where everyone is inspired to get involved in nature's recovery, and where wildlife plays a key role in addressing the nature and climate emergencies. Although it is a bold and complex challenge, it is a necessity — and the solution to the very real and present dangers that nature and people face in the midst of a climate and nature emergency.

Our ability to galvanize people to take action, to work collaboratively to achieve the greatest impact for nature, and our knowledge, experience, 'localness' and innovative ways of working, are our core strengths. Together, and with the support of local communities, farmers, landowners, businesses, and our members who stand with us, we are in the best place possible to turn our vision into a reality — and ensure the recovery of our natural world.

Public Benefit

- The Trustees of Ulster Wildlife have taken into account the Charity Commission's guidance on Public Benefit, and consider it fully when planning and reviewing the charity's actions and outcomes and in planning our future activities.
- This Trustees' Report shows how we performed against our strategic outcomes in 2022/23.
- Ulster Wildlife's charitable objectives as set out in our Articles of Association can be found on page 32.

Our Vision

A wilder future where people and nature are thriving together

Our Purpose

Our purpose is to protect and restore nature on land and at sea. We will play our part in ending the climate and ecological emergencies, creating a society where nature is valued and is part of our daily lives.

Our Strategic Outcomes for 2030

1. NATURE - Nature is in recovery and wildlife is thriving across Northern Ireland.

2. PEOPLE - More people are taking positive action for nature and climate and are benefiting from time spent in nature.

3. CLIMATE - Nature-based solutions are playing a central role in addressing climate change.

Outcome 1 Nature

Nature is in recovery and wildlife is thriving across Northern Ireland

With one in ten species at risk of extinction here, we need to reverse the decline and bring nature back. It has become clear that protecting what we have left is no longer enough. It is our aim to create new spaces for nature by connecting habitats and restoring landscapes, and by working collaboratively to help species and habitats recover.

857 hectares of land managed for wildlife (equivalent to 2,116 football pitches)

400 farmers and landowners received advice

40k ha of farms whose management we influenced.

108 gardens surveyed by the public for hedgehogs

Barn owl chick, Co Down



Barn Owls

With fewer than 30 breeding pairs of barns owls in Northern Ireland, we continued to carry out a range of conservation actions to help this iconic farmland bird recover.

Barn owls faced a challenging breeding season in 2021, so we were delighted to receive more positive news in 2022. Across Northern Ireland, at known nest sites, there were eight broods, resulting in 24 chicks fledging – a considerable increase compared to the previous year. A number of new nest sites were also discovered in nest boxes that we had previously erected, in collaboration with volunteers and partners.

Twenty additional nest boxes were installed in strategic locations during the winter to help barn owls from existing nests expand their range to these newly established sites. Our aim is to create a network of nest boxes and suitable barn owl habitats across the country, which will enable this priority species to recover, spread and ultimately thrive using the 'Nature Recovery Network' approach.

We received substantial interest from landowners eager to help and conducted 34 on-site visits to assess farms for their suitability as barn owl habitats, providing valuable land management advice in the process.

Additionally, we received a considerable number of barn owl and long-eared owl sightings and launched a new sightings database to help streamline the recording process.

Red squirrel © Ronald Surgenor



Red Squirrels

Following the launch of our Red Squirrel Conservation Strategy for Northern Ireland, we have been actively supporting local red squirrel groups in their conservation efforts. We have also been collaborating with local councils to assist them in implementing measures to safeguard this priority species.

To ensure the long-term monitoring of red squirrels, pine martens, and grey squirrels, our dedicated staff, volunteers, and external partners conducted a comprehensive survey to determine their presence or absence across Northern Ireland. Woodlands were surveyed across Northern Ireland – 218 in total – revealing a significant rise in pine marten presence over the last five years.

To help simplify data collection and to inform conservation action, we developed and launched a new sightings database for the public to record red squirrels, grey squirrels and pine martens. A grey squirrel control database was also developed for volunteers.

Additionally, we collaborated with the Northern Ireland Squirrel Forum and the National Trust to successfully introduce red squirrels to the Castle Ward estate.

Hedgehog survey at Slievenacloy Nature Reserve



Hedgehogs

We teamed up again with NUI Galway last year for the Irish Hedgehog Survey to help find out more about these much-loved mammals. This citizen science project encourages the public to submit sightings of hedgehogs and carry out surveys using footprint tunnels and camera traps.

Over 1,000 people in Northern Ireland signed up to take part in the survey, which ran from May to September, with sightings collected all year round. In total, 390 hedgehog sightings were submitted – a huge increase since the survey began in 2020. Sixteen hedgehog talks and workshops were delivered, with 70 people trained in the survey methodology.

Along with a number of other organisations, we carried out 15 Local Area Surveys; these consisted of 10 tunnels placed in a 1km square for five nights. A number of our nature reserves were surveyed including Balloo, Bog Meadows, Slievenacloy and Glenarm. We had a fantastic uptake from the public and our members with 108 surveys carried out in people's gardens. This data is important to establish a baseline for hedgehogs and build a better picture of their distribution, so we can work to secure their future.

We have also been raising awareness of hedgehogs and encouraging people to create hedgehog-friendly gardens through our 'Let Nature In' wildlife gardening campaign.

Tystie transporting sheep to Isle of Muck Nature Reserve



Nature Reserves

Our nature reserves cover nearly 850 hectares of land spread across 19 sites that include some of Northern Ireland's most important habitats and species. From a small field in the Glens of Antrim safeguarding a rare plant to a vast expanse of wilderness in the Belfast Hills, our nature reserves are equally important in their conservation efforts.

A key highlight of the year was the acquisition of a new boat named 'Tystie' to aid our seabird conservation work at the Isle of Muck – our sincere thanks to everyone who generously donated to our appeal. At Glenullin Bog, monitoring of our efforts to raise water levels through damming and bunding yielded positive results, confirming the first steps in the restoration of this 45-hectare lowland raised bog.

As is the nature of the natural world, it was a year of highs and lows for many priority species we help to protect. There were record counts of small egg moth webs at Umbra, while nesting kittiwakes hit their highest ever numbers at Isle of Muck, although a disappointing number of chicks fledged thereafter. Slievenacloy saw a record number of common lizards surveyed, and Devon carpet moth was recorded again at Glenarm, proving that the latter species has started colonising Northern Ireland. Beyond this, it was another year of hard work from our staff and volunteers with the reward of conserving and restoring our native wildlife – a fantastic effort by all involved.

Protected Sites

We continued to work in partnership with the Ministry of Defence to support the management of Ballykinler and Magilligan Special Areas of Conservation (SACs).

Our previous suspension of scrub cutting at Ballykinler ended with the removal of 10 hectares of thick gorse, which was obstructing the growth of crucial plants and covering the significant grey-dune grassland habitat. Furthermore, we resumed scrub cutting at Magilligan and successfully eliminated three hectares of dense blackthorn scrub. We also treated scrub that had been cut in the previous three years at both locations to prevent regrowth.

Surveys were completed for a number of priority species including petalwort, marsh fritillary butterfly, scarce crimson and gold moth, northern colletes bee and small egg moth.



Scarce crimson & gold moth, Magilligan SAC © Adam Mantell

NRN partners at Clandeboy Estate



Nature Recovery Networks

We continued to work with project partners RSPB NI, National Trust and Woodland Trust to develop ways to adopt a landscape-scale approach to nature's recovery using Nature Recovery Networks (NRNs) – more, bigger, better and joined-up wildlife-rich places to benefit people and wildlife.

A second series of knowledge-sharing webinars took place focusing on work already underway in Northern Ireland and exploring our next steps. A suite of educational videos were also produced to provide greater understanding of the Nature Recovery Network approach. Finally, partners had the opportunity to visit stakeholders involved in the design and delivery of the Central Scotland Green Network, providing ample ideas and inspiration.



Engaging with farmers in Co Fermanagh © Giles Knight

Environmental Farming Scheme

Membership of our Environmental Farming Scheme (EFS) Group programme, funded by the Department of Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs (DAERA), continued to grow. This is one of five pilot schemes in Northern Ireland designed to support farmers to deliver nature conservation at scale through agri-environment schemes.

Our group facilitators worked with 441 farmers last year to engage them in positive land management; this included 24 group events, 268 one-to-one mentoring sessions and 152 farm walkovers.

We also added around 75 farms to the Higher Level Environmental Farming Scheme – which focuses on designated sites and priority habitats – putting approximately 4,000 hectares of high nature value land into positive management across four counties. In total, we have engaged with over 20% of all farmers with EFS (Higher) Agreements.

We engaged in a diverse range of activities, from identifying woodland and meadow plants and providing guidance on tree planting and hedge management to hosting peatland restoration demonstrations. We delved into sustainable farming concepts and provided valuable guidance on paperwork and record keeping. Additionally, we organised unique farm walks conducted after dark and addressed the impacts of ash dieback. We also collaborated with farmer groups in Co. Leitrim and worked closely with farmers and partner organisations to assist landowners in safeguarding priority species, including marsh fritillary, curlew, barn owls and red squirrels.

In addition, through on-the-ground surveys, facilitators and associates added 212 hectares of land to priority habitat maps, mainly species-rich grassland in Fermanagh, ensuring it can be protected and made eligible for agri-environment measures in the future.

Public Affairs, Policy and Legislation

It has been a critical year for policy and public affairs. World leaders finally signed the Montreal Biodiversity Framework at the UN Biodiversity Conference (COP15) in December 2022. This is the most significant global agreement yet to tackle biodiversity loss with over 23 targets agreed.

Although not binding, governments must show their progress in meeting the targets within their biodiversity plans. In Northern Ireland, we have been working with the Department of Agriculture, Environment, and Rural Affairs (DAERA) to co-develop a new Biodiversity Strategy and will be pressing for legally binding targets and strong reporting duties to be put into place. We also ran a communications campaign throughout COP15 to engage our supporter base and highlight the urgent need for local action.

The UK Government's proposed Retained EU Law Bill, which could see vital pieces of environmental legislation of EU origin scrapped, required a rapid response to ensure decades of wins for wildlife and wild places were not lost. We joined forces with fellow environmental charities to send a joint letter to NI Ministers as well as engaging with key local politicians to speak out against this Bill. We also worked with The Wildlife Trusts to mobilise public support in the form of template letters and a postcard campaign to MP constituency offices.

One of the biggest highlights of the year was in June when the long-awaited Northern Ireland Climate Change Act became law. As part of the NI Climate Coalition, we campaigned throughout the legislative process and provided oral and written evidence to the Assembly. This is the

first-ever legislation in Northern Ireland to drive forward action to tackle the climate and nature crises, although much work now needs to be done developing the first carbon budgets and sectoral plans.

We also responded to several other major consultations during the year, including the Draft Ammonia Strategy, Wild Birds Licenses, and the Republic of Ireland's fourth National Biodiversity Action Plan.

As a lead member of the Northern Ireland Marine Task Force, we worked with DAERA to help co-design vital new conservation strategies for Northern Ireland. These included the Blue Carbon Action Plan, to improve understanding of how coastal marine habitats can contribute to climate mitigation and adaptation strategies, the development of a Seabird Conservation Strategy, and an Elasmobranch Conservation Strategy to provide guidelines for the conservation of local sharks, skates and rays.

We also collaboratively responded to several key consultations affecting the marine environment. These included the Draft Joint Fisheries Statement, Management measures on the use of fast craft and personal watercraft in MPA's, Hand-gathering of intertidal shellfish in NI: a call for evidence, and the Future Strategy for the Marine and Fisheries Fund.

Barn owl success at Ballycruttie Farm

“Ballycruttie Farm has been involved with the RSPB’s Co. Down Farmland Initiative for a few years now, providing rich-seed habitats, rough grass margins, and hedgerows for a number of birds on the red list such as yellowhammers, linnets, tree sparrows, reed buntings and skylarks.

During conversations with RSPB, we talked about erecting barn owl boxes so they put us in touch with Ulster Wildlife. Ulster Wildlife advised us on the best locations and we set about putting our first box up in February 2021. Thankfully, having a husband who is a tree surgeon made this process a little easier.

On that same evening, we were excited to hear the eerie, long screech of a male barn owl, which continued for a few nights.

One particular evening, as I was chasing a duck to bed, I suddenly became startled by something flying low above my head – the night was silent, so the noise took me by surprise. The next evening, I went out a little earlier to see if my thoughts were correct – and they were; an owl flew out of the box and headed for the woodland.

Excited about our discovery, we invited Ulster Wildlife out and together we observed the barn owl box using infrared binoculars. Hissing sounds confirmed there was at least one chick.

Roll onto the middle of June, and a team arrived to ring what we assumed were two chicks. To our surprise, three chicks awaited us – two boys and a girl!

This was an amazing experience, both for my family and for all of those involved. They are the most beautiful, majestic birds, and we are so proud to have been part of their recovery story.”



Dawn Stocking
Ballycruttie Farm



Dawn Stocking with Ulster Wildlife and RSPBNI representatives



Barn owl chick being ringed

Outcome 2 People

More people are taking positive action for nature and climate and are benefitting from time spent in nature

Without more people taking action themselves, the fight to protect nature and tackle the climate crisis is an insurmountable task. We need to engage and empower people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities to take action and stand up for nature, and also to reconnect people with wild places and green spaces. By increasing the number of people who can speak up for nature, our collective voice will be louder and reach further than ever before.

95 registered volunteers

1,500 volunteer hours donated to nature

1,020 people learned about nature at our events

1,600 gardens signed up to our wildlife gardening campaign

28 Youth Forum members

Corporate volunteers at Ballynahone Bog Nature Reserve

Youth Forum residential at Crawfordsburn



Youth Forum

Our Youth Forum continued to grow with 12 new members joining during the year, providing a platform for young people to speak up for nature, take part in campaigns and take action for wildlife.

A highlight was a weekend residential at Crawfordsburn Country Park where members explored rocky shore ecology and made bird boxes, as well as discussing ways young people can influence change and have their say on the future of the Youth Forum. Other activities this year included 'Leave No Trace' training and contributing to a consultation on DAERA's Green Growth Strategy.

Young people repairing paths at Colin Glen Forest Park



Wild Youth

Young people from north and west Belfast engaged in nature-based wellbeing activities as part of this innovative programme, delivered in conjunction with Belfast Hills Partnership, and funded by the National Lottery Community Fund.

750 young people took part this year, and over 125 young people gained Bronze, Silver or Gold Wild Youth Award certificates in recognition of their time spent connecting with and helping the natural world. Feedback from participants has shown increases in their level of connection with nature as well as their mental wellbeing. A particular highlight of this programme has been the opportunity to work with young people who are new to Northern Ireland and who have arrived here recently seeking asylum.



Our Bright Future

Youth Forum members continued to promote three key policy issues on outdoor learning, green jobs, and the role of young people in decision-making, as part of our work supporting the UK Our Bright Future initiative.

As well as producing a Youth Manifesto for the Environment, forum members also met with local politicians to outline their environmental concerns and to advocate for specific actions in the run up to the Assembly elections in May 2022. Although the initiative ended in November 2022, the legacy of our involvement continues in other youth projects we are now delivering.



Tree talk with Bloomfield Wildlife Watch



Training workshop for youth workers in Belfast

Sustainable Youth Work Curriculum

Training workshops were delivered for youth workers from more than 20 organisations, focusing on the new Sustainable Youth Work curriculum we developed on behalf of the Education Authority.

The workshops gave youth workers the skills and confidence to engage young people with environmental issues. Resources are now available to youth workers across Northern Ireland via the Education Authority website.



Bloomfield group tree planting at Orangefield Park

Wildlife Watch Groups

Wildlife Watch Groups for children continued to grow with 30 members spanning three groups in Lisburn, Bloomfield and Bog Meadows, all run by passionate volunteers.

The groups meet monthly to enjoy activities such as pond dipping, bat walks, and listening to wildlife talks by guest speakers. During the year, the Bloomfield group launched a Tree Trail at Orangefield Park, in conjunction with Belfast City Council, raising the funds to purchase and plant 24 native trees, including signage for locals to enjoy.

Helping Glentoran with their raised beds



Nextdoor Nature

We embraced a new way of working with communities in south and east Belfast by discovering what they need and want in their area to help nature flourish and then supporting them with the skills and tools to take action on their own terms.

A number of community-led projects are now underway to help put nature into recovery, thanks to funding support from the National Lottery Heritage Fund. Glentoran Football Club is supporting local people to grow their own produce, raised beds have been revitalised at The Larder foodbank, wildlife gardening workshops have been delivered to alleyway gardeners in south Belfast, and residents of Wingrove Gardens plan to make their whole street wildlife-friendly. Most importantly, the local communities decide on what happens and drive the change in their own neighbourhoods.

Bog Meadows youth volunteer team



Community Engagement at Bog Meadows

Our work to strengthen a sense of community ownership of Bog Meadows Nature Reserve continued with a range of programmes to engage local residents and community groups, thanks to support from the National Lottery Community Fund.

This included nature connection sessions, wildlife walks, summer schemes, school education sessions, regular adult and youth volunteering opportunities and a Wildlife Watch group for children.

We are also delighted to have been awarded a grant from the Department for Infrastructure to create a 'Community Wildlife Garden'. This will be planned and cultivated in partnership with local community groups to showcase a working wildlife garden and provide a valuable community space for our activities.



'Let Nature In' Wildlife Gardening Campaign

We continued to promote our 'Let Nature In' campaign to encourage more people to make space for nature in their gardens.

Over 1,600 people have signed up to the campaign so far, with regular emails providing tips and advice throughout the year to help people welcome nature into their gardens.



Pine Marten, Co Down © Ronald Surgenor

Yellowhammer © Mark Hamblin 2020 VISION



Defend Nature Campaign

We teamed up with The Wildlife Trusts to mobilise public action to defend nature and put a stop to the UK Government's plans to threaten wildlife with the proposed Retained EU Law Bill.

Over 150 supporters used our template letter or postcard to ask their MPs to scrap the Bill, which could see vital pieces of environmental legislation of EU-origin weakened or removed.

We also joined forces with fellow environmental charities to send a joint letter to NI Ministers as well as engaging with key local politicians to speak out against this Bill.

Portballintrae Armada Interpretation project



Landfill Communities Fund

We helped distribute £276,000 of Landfill Communities Fund contributions from Fermanagh and Omagh District Council and Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council to 17 community and environmental projects.

The Landfill Communities Fund (LCF) is a grant scheme that enables operators of landfill sites to contribute a portion of the monies they pay as landfill tax directly to approved Environmental Bodies, such as Ulster Wildlife, for distribution to projects of environmental and public benefit.

2022 saw an increase in project activity with the effects of the pandemic winding down. For the remaining lifespan of contributions from our two landfill operators, we will continue to maximise the benefits of distributing funding to projects which are aligned with our own strategic goals of promoting health and wellbeing through enjoyment of the environment and rebuilding biodiversity.



Volunteers at Bog Meadows Nature Reserve

Red kite event for members



Exclusive Member Events

We delivered a successful series of online talks for members during the winter, many delivered by guest speakers, on everything from red kites and brent geese to wildlife photography.

We also planned an exclusive programme of member face-to-face events from woodland foraging to coastal walks for the spring and summer months.

Over 100 members joined us for our AGM and Members' Day at Malone House in September with special guest Craig Bennett, CEO of The Wildlife Trusts.

Danske Bank volunteers at Balloo Woodland Nature Reserve



Volunteering

We received tremendous support from 95 registered volunteers with practical conservation tasks on our nature reserves, species conservation efforts, people engagement and office support.

Over 200 corporate volunteers from 24 local businesses joined us at Balloo, Bog Meadows, Slievenacloy and Ballynahone Bog Nature Reserves to lend a hand with invasive species control, litter picks, hedge trimming, path clearing and site maintenance.

Our first native oyster nursery at Bangor Marina received fantastic interest from potential volunteers, with 15 dedicated volunteers now regularly helping us look after the oysters and conducting regular health checks.

Five volunteer student placements from Queen's and Ulster Universities joined our Nature Reserve and Marine teams for the year. They benefitted from a range of training and invaluable on-the-job experience learning about habitat management, invasive species control, GIS mapping, volunteer engagement, and survey data and reporting.



Youth Action For Nature

“ I got involved with Ulster Wildlife’s Youth Forum because I had a desire to connect with other young people with an interest in nature. Looking back, I was isolated in my love for nature and even a bit lost. The Youth Forum gave me a direction for my interest, and the virtual meet-ups allowed me to connect and learn from other young people. The Forum has been instrumental in giving me confidence and a sense of belonging within circles of ecology and environmental advocacy. I was even lucky enough to represent Ulster Wildlife at the Wildlife Trusts’ planning event for the upcoming youth festival.

The Forum is not just a connection-building group, but also a brilliant educational tool. One of my favourite memories was visiting Cuilcagh to learn about peatland restoration with young farmers – it was such a valuable experience, and each interaction with a different issue (like peatland restoration) leaves you a little more invested in it than you were before. In a similar way, meeting others in the Forum that have different interests or approaches can lead to the discovery of new interests – like butterflies!

I’m currently studying Biological Sciences at Queen’s and hope to pursue a career in ecology, or science communication. Not everyone in the Forum will – but I think that’s what makes it special. The Youth Forum supports those wishing to pursue an environmental job but also fosters and maintains an interest and care for nature in those who will not. In the face of the biodiversity and climate crises, we need everyone in all sectors to care – and through the Youth Forum, Ulster Wildlife is playing its part.



Eibhlinn Fee, aged 20
Ulster Youth Forum member

Outcome 3 Climate

Nature-based solutions are playing a critical role in addressing the impacts of climate change in Northern Ireland

We are in the midst of a nature and climate crises and neither can be resolved in isolation. The natural world can provide its own solutions to combat and reverse these threats. We are promoting the implementation of nature-based solutions such as the restoration of peatlands and of coastal blue carbon habitats to provide carbon sequestration and storage while supporting resilient wildlife.

50 hectares of peatland restored across 3 sites

34,500^{m3} of seawater filtered by our native oyster nursery



Peatland restoration in action

Restoring peatlands for nature and climate

We were a key delivery partner in the EU funded (Interreg VA) Collaborative Action for the Natura Network (CANN) project, in which we oversaw the restoration of hundreds of hectares of priority peatland habitats, from blanket bog on Cuilcagh Mountain to the species-rich fens in Lecale.

The CANN project ended in September 2022 with the completion of Conservation Action Plans for 11 Special Areas of Conservation (SAC). Since then, with funding from the DAERA Environment Fund, we have used these plans to deliver further restoration on key peatland habitats across Northern Ireland. This includes the installation of hundreds of new dams at Fairy Water Bogs and Tully Bog SAC in Co Tyrone. Additionally, we cleared invasive reed and scrub at Carrowcarlin Fen Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI) in Co Down using specialist amphibious machinery. We also continued efforts to control invasive rhododendron at Peatlands Park SAC, with over five hectares treated in areas that had never been addressed before.

Alongside this, we have been developing a 'pipeline' of potential restoration sites and collecting the data needed to deliver works on the ground when funding becomes available. We've collected LiDAR data (light detection and ranging), aerial imagery, and developed restoration plans for a variety of new sites including Teal Lough SAC and Magho Cliffs ASSI. We have also been working closely with other environmental organisations and making use of our new drone technology to collect data on areas such as the Mourne Mountains and Colebrooke Bogs.

Monitoring of atmospheric ammonia on sensitive sites has also been a key part of our work over the past year. We have continued to work with Northern Ireland Environment Agency to collect and analyse ammonia deposition on both Curran Bog and Turmennan Fen SAC. These efforts form part of wider monitoring taking place at a national level and will help strengthen policy and regulation around atmospheric ammonia going forward.

In February 2022, we purchased Haughey's Bog, a degraded peatland site in County Tyrone, with the aim of showcasing a range of peatland restoration techniques and developing a best practice site.

Restoring blue carbon habitats and species

We installed our second native oyster nursery at Glenarm Marina in March 2023 to help bring back this endangered species and provide a host of wider benefits to the marine environment.

The native oyster (*Ostrea edulis*) was once a common sight along the Glenarm coastline up until the mid-1800s when overfishing, disease, invasive species and pollution decimated the local population. To help revive the species, we have installed over 800 mature native oysters in 30 purpose-built cages suspended over the edges of the marina's pontoons, thanks to funding from DAERA and a generous donation from Wilson Resources.

The nursery will release millions of oyster larvae every summer, which will settle onto the seabed and support the oyster's natural recovery. These ocean superheroes will also help boost biodiversity by providing nursery grounds for fish and other creatures, improve water clarity and quality by filtering 162,000 litres of water every day, and tackle climate change by storing carbon in their shells.

At our first native oyster nursery in Bangor Marina, the oysters are thriving thanks to support from a fantastic group of volunteers who have helped us keep the cages clean, carry out health checks, and monitor the oysters' growth. Since April 2022, the average growth rate has been ~25mm with an average increase in weight of ~30g, similar to that observed in wild populations.

Over 60 marine species have also been recorded at the Bangor nursery since it was established, including common prawn, juvenile crab, pipefish, lumpsuckers, tompot blennies, spined stickleback fish and, on two occasions, the critically endangered European eel. This is a win for wildlife and as the oyster nursery grows and matures, we envisage a lot more species being discovered within these unique hanging mini reef systems.

Native oyster shell



Launch of Glenarm oyster nursery





Oyster cage at Bangor Marina



Helen Marks, Radio 4, with staff and volunteers at the Bangor oyster nursery

Bringing Back Native Oysters

“ I have always been interested in wildlife, whether it be on land or under the sea where I enjoyed diving down to wrecks and seeing the diversity of the wildlife down there.

Since I stopped diving, I had been looking for something to occupy my spare time. Then I heard about Ulster Wildlife's oyster nursery in Bangor Marina, so I went along to the volunteer induction day and was so inspired I had to get involved.

Although it is not very glamorous hoisting up and handling dirty oyster cages, I enjoy weighing and measuring the oysters to see their development and meeting new friends with like-minded interests.

It was fantastic to see a local radio station come down to the marina to talk to us and find out about the restoration project. I was particularly chuffed when they asked me to explain to the listeners what activity we were doing and why we choose to volunteer.

Over the last few months, I have learned a lot about how the oysters cluster together and make a sort of reef, which in turn provides a home and shelter for other marine life. I've learned how overfishing and pollution have drastically reduced their population in once large thriving beds, which in turn has affected the ecosystem, so it's crucial we redress the situation and start nurseries to re-introduce the native oyster back to the sea bed.



David Hill
Oyster Nursery Volunteer
at Bangor Marina

”



Thank you to our supporters

We would like to express our profound gratitude to all our valued members for their unwavering support throughout the year. Their dedication has been the cornerstone of our conservation efforts and has enabled us to make a significant impact for nature.

We are equally thankful for the generous gifts in wills received this year, as well as donations from businesses that have supported our work. In addition, funders and philanthropic loans have been key to developing long-term conservation projects and purchasing key areas of land for habitat restoration.

With this support, we have been able to implement vital conservation projects, restore habitats, protect endangered species, and create safe havens for wildlife to flourish. Thank you!

Tystie - our new boat for the Isle of Muck Nature Reserve



Members

Many charities are feeling the effects of the cost of living crisis on donations and regular giving. With fewer people giving to charity, our membership income dropped slightly this year. Our existing members continue to be an extremely important source of unrestricted funds and we were heartened to see the vast majority of members staying with us even in these difficult times, aided in part by an increase in member-exclusive events and benefits over the past year. Member generosity is the driving force behind our conservation efforts.

Our annual appeal raised more than £10,000 in match funding for the purchase of a new boat for seabird conservation at our Isle of Muck Nature Reserve. Our generous supporters chose to name the boat "Tystie" – the local/Scots name for black guillemot.

Swallow at Slieveadacy Nature Reserve © Ronald Surgenor



Legacy and In-Memory

Gifts in wills and in-memory donations, no matter the size, allow a person's passion for nature to live on. Every legacy or in-memory donation allows us to protect and buy more nature reserves, save more species, help support new nature champions, and ensure that future generations can experience nature.

Each year, more people are recognising the significant impact a gift in your will to Ulster Wildlife can make. This year, committed members and supporters left specific bequests to Ulster Wildlife and in-memory gifts were also received. Several people remembered loved ones via online donations.

Power NI volunteers at Slieveadacy Nature Reserve

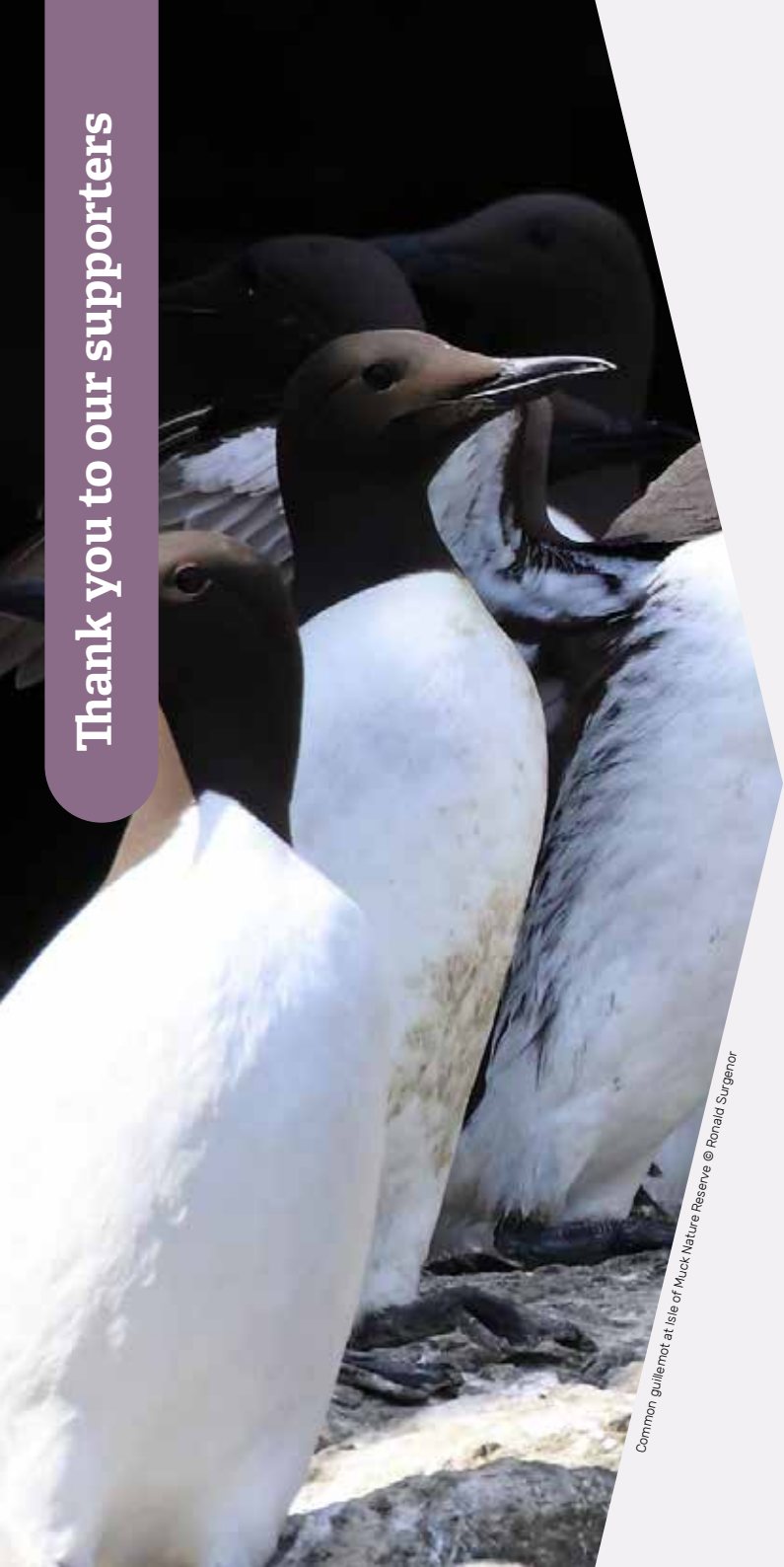


Businesses

We are proud to work with many local businesses to support nature's recovery. Working with others is crucial to tackling the nature and climate crises. Financial support from local businesses, in the form of unrestricted and in-kind donations or through the commissioning of our Ecological Consultancy services, is crucial to supplement our other funding streams. In addition, for these businesses, supporting Ulster Wildlife demonstrates their commitment to championing local nature conservation efforts to both their employees and customers.

Some of the businesses supporting local nature conservation efforts this year: Almac, Ardbarron Trust, The Boulevard Banbridge (Ulster Wildlife nominated as Charity of the Year), ENCIRC, Field Day Ireland, Finnebrogue, Mash Direct, Moy Park, NI Trucks, PowerNI, Spirit Aerosystems and Wilson Resources.

Thank you to our supporters



Common guillemot at Isle of Muck Nature Reserve © Ronald Surgenor

Six spot burnet moth at Slievenacloy Nature Reserve © Ronald Surgenor



Round-leaved sundew © Simon Gray



Funders

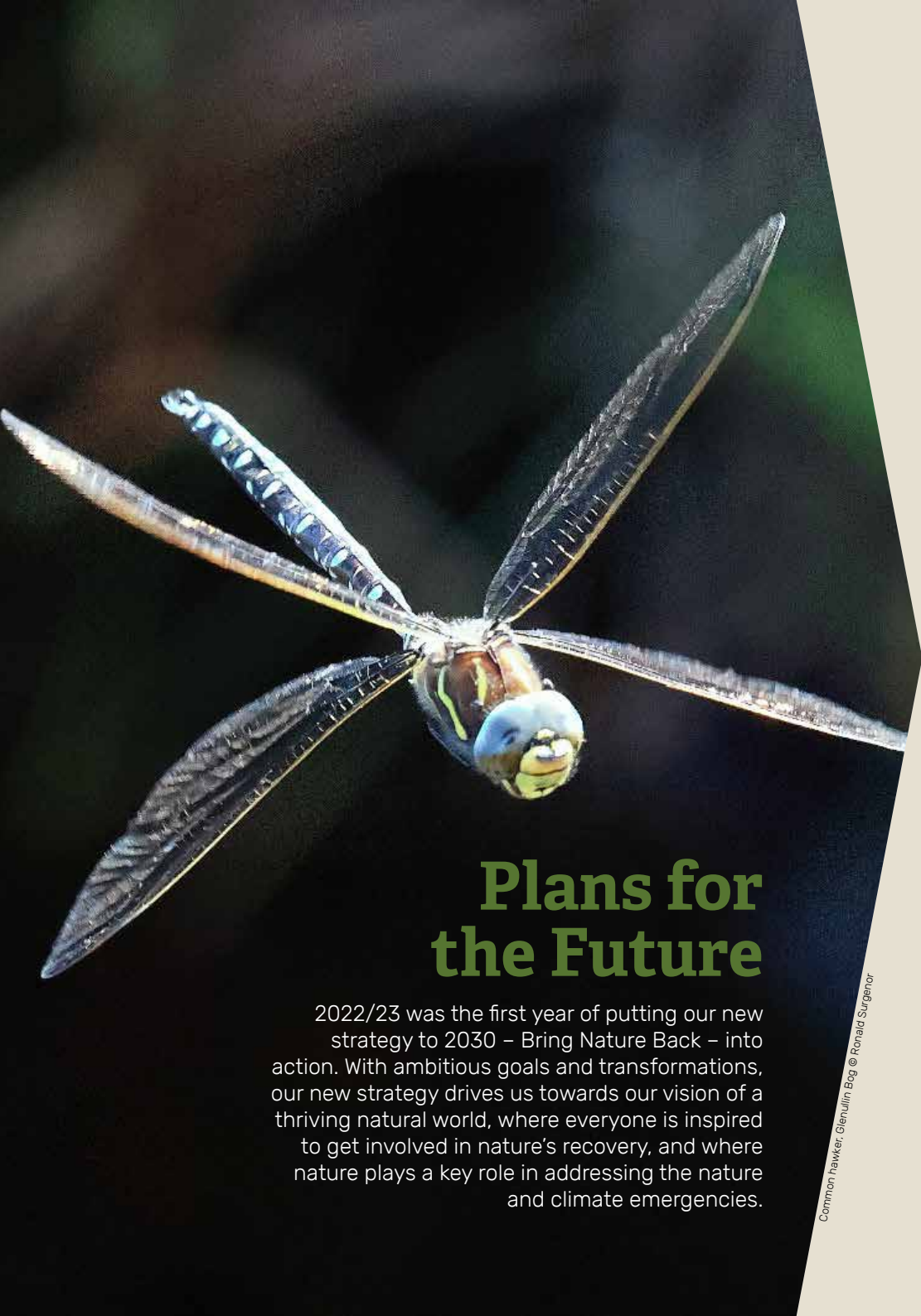
Charities rely on a wide range of funding streams including statutory (government) funding and charitable trust funding to help support some of our larger projects and areas of work. We are very grateful to our funding partners for providing funding for specific projects last year.

Thanks to our funding partners this year: Ards and North Down Borough Council, Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, Education Authority, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, Garfield Weston Foundation, INTERREG VA, Marine Institute, Ministry of Defense, National Lottery Community Fund, National Lottery Heritage Fund and Department of Communities.

Philanthropic Lenders

We believe that part of the solution to aid nature's recovery is to acquire and restore land. However, cash flow when land comes up for sale can often be a major barrier. Philanthropic lenders enable charities to respond quickly to land purchase and restoration opportunities when they arise, without the need to raise the funds first.

In February 2022, we were able to purchase a commercially cut-over peatland site in Co Tyrone with the aim of showcasing a range of peatland restoration techniques and developing a best practice site. A Philanthropic loan from John Smith, and gifts in Wills from supporters, helped secure this space for nature until funding from the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs was received.



Plans for the Future

2022/23 was the first year of putting our new strategy to 2030 – Bring Nature Back – into action. With ambitious goals and transformations, our new strategy drives us towards our vision of a thriving natural world, where everyone is inspired to get involved in nature's recovery, and where nature plays a key role in addressing the nature and climate emergencies.

Common Hawker, Glenullin Bog © Ronald Surgenor

Outcome 1: Nature is in recovery and wildlife is thriving across Northern Ireland.

Fundamental to achieving this outcome is the development and establishment of a national 'Nature Recovery Network' for Northern Ireland – a strategic approach to creating more, bigger, better and joined-up spaces for wildlife to thrive.

We will continue to explore opportunities for our nature reserves to deliver as part of a connected network within the wider landscape, while also delivering specific conservation actions for key species.

Our continued work engaging farmers and landowners is critical and we will work more closely with the fishing industry to ensure our seas are well-managed for nature.

Outcome 2: More people are taking positive action for nature and climate and are benefitting from time spent in nature.

Supporting and empowering people of all ages to become agents of change is critical to making the significant changes we need to address climate change and nature's decline.

We will continue to engage, empower and amplify the voice of people across Northern Ireland to speak up for and take action for nature through our campaigning work and community mobilising programmes.

We will also continue to engage younger generations in issues that will affect their future by growing our Youth Forum and by supporting youth-led nature activities. In addition, we will develop our Children and Young People Strategy to embed this new approach in our work going forward.

Maintaining and strengthening our membership and supporter network is key to delivering on the ambition of our strategy and a comprehensive growth plan and new staff structure will be put into place to expand our membership support base over the next five years.

Outcome 3: Nature-based solutions are playing a central role in addressing climate change.

Over the next number of years, we will work to tackle both the climate and biodiversity crises at a local level, recognising and promoting the importance of nature-based solutions. We will expand our work to restore peatlands, develop new native oyster nurseries, and establish new partnership projects to deliver blue carbon habitat restoration such as seagrass. Together, these initiatives will provide long-term carbon sequestration and storage while also promoting diverse and resilient wildlife.

Financial Review at 31 March 2023

Ulster Wildlife's financial position remained stable during the year and a modest surplus on unrestricted activities was achieved.

Sources of Income

Unrestricted income is revenue generated by the charity for its general purposes. It can be used at the discretion of the charity on any of the charity's objects and a substantial component is donations from our members and supporters.

Unrestricted income is 7% lower than the previous year (-£46k). Donations and legacies decreased (-£65k) as did consultancy income (-£14k). This was partly offset by an additional grant from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation of £35k to contribute towards the cost of living increases.

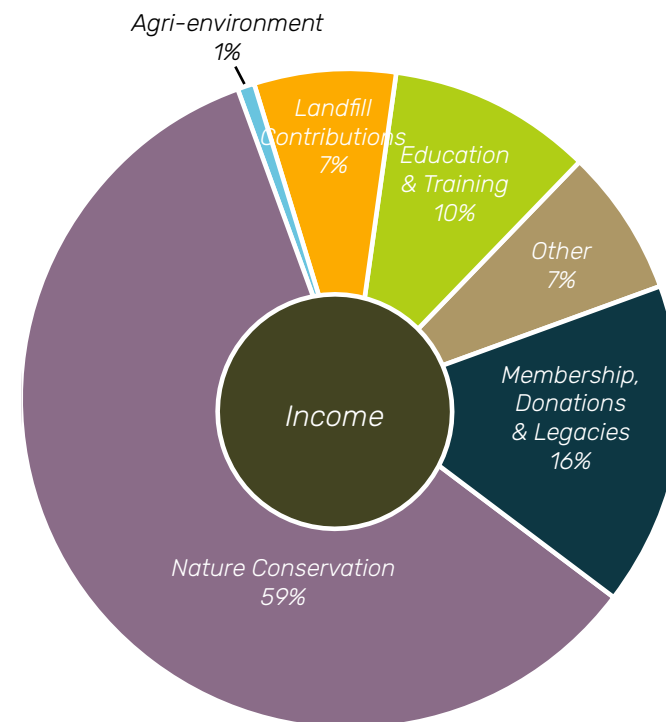
Restricted income is income given to the charity for specific purposes. It may be a grant for a specific piece of conservation work or education activity or funds to be awarded as grants to third parties, in line with specific grant guidelines.

Ulster Wildlife's restricted income has two main components, grants for specific conservation and education

activity which is delivered by the charity; and Landfill Communities Funds where grants are awarded by the charity to third parties for purposes defined under the Landfill Communities Fund guidelines.

Grants from third parties awarded to Ulster Wildlife for the direct delivery of specific conservation outcomes decreased by £260k in the year. In the previous year DAERA contributed £594k towards the purchase of additional lands at Slievenacloy which increased the 21/22 income substantially. DAERA continued to award Challenge Fund income however in 22/23 for conservation work on peatlands, our marine environment, priority species and nature reserves including the £75k towards the purchase of a peatland site at Haughey's Bog.

Other grants received in the year are outlined in Note 4 to the Financial Statements.



Income	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds £	Ratio
Membership, Donations & Legacies	453	72	525	16%
Nature Conservation	-	1,919	1,919	59%
Agri-environment payments	28	-	28	1%
Landfill Tax Contributions	-	227	227	7%
Environmental Education & Training	-	314	314	10%
Other Income	181	45	226	7%
Total Income	662	2,577	3,239	100%

Financial Review at 31 March 2023

How the Charity Spent its Resources

Overall expenditure was £273k lower in the year to 31 March 2023 than in the previous year.

In line with the income split, a large part of the expenditure is on conservation and education activity.

Restricted projects make a contribution to core overhead costs for time and expenses incurred in running the projects. After taking this contribution into account an unrestricted surplus of £23k was generated.

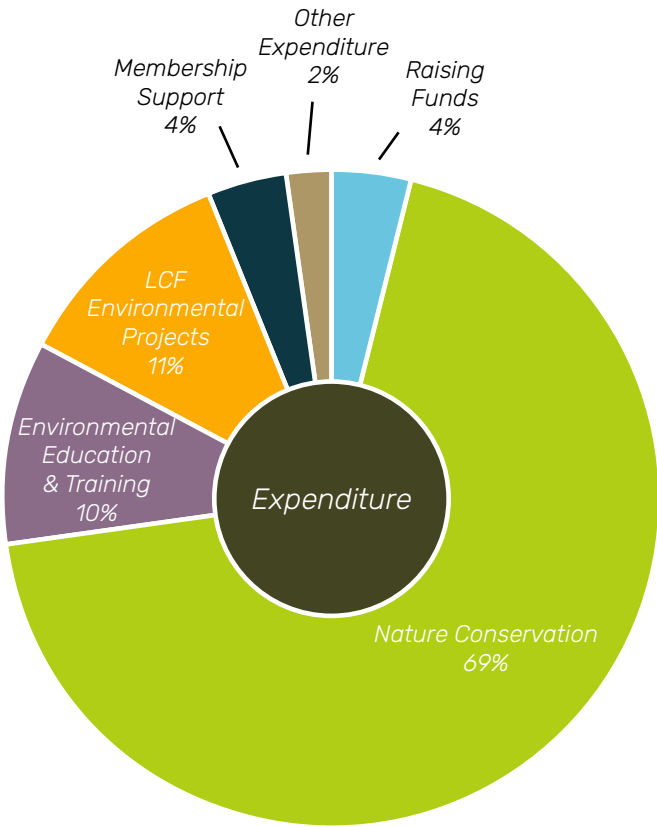
The surplus is in keeping with the charity’s objectives which are to deliver conservation outcomes rather than a surplus of income over expenditure. A modest surplus is, however, necessary in order to maintain financial stability and help to secure the long term viability of the charity.

After expenditure on restricted projects, the balance on restricted funds amounted to £500k.

This balance represents income received relating to projects in the year to 31 March 2023 where expenditure was incurred in prior years or will be incurred in future years and was in line with expectations. £184k relates to income received from DAERA for the purchase of peatland at Haughey’s Bog and capital equipment including where the expenditure has been capitalised on the balance sheet.

Restricted financial reserves cannot be utilised by the charity, except for the very specific purposes set out by the funder. These financial reserves are therefore not available to fund either general working capital requirements or any unexpected events.

Expenditure	Total Funds £	Ratio
Raising Funds	95	4%
Nature Conservation	1,870	69%
Environmental Education & Training	274	10%
LCF Environmental Projects	304	11%
Membership Support	125	4%
Other Expenditure	46	2%
Total Expenditure	2,714	100%



Structure, Governance and Management

Ulster Wildlife Trust, (operating as Ulster Wildlife) is registered with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland (NIC101848) and is a not-for-profit company incorporated in Northern Ireland, limited by guarantee (NI 12711). It is an independent body, locally governed, affiliated to The Wildlife Trusts, a federated network of 46 charities across the UK.

The charity is governed by a Board of Trustees (Council) comprised of up to 17 members who serve up to a nine-year term. The Ulster Wildlife Council is responsible for making strategic decisions in relation to policy and procedure within Ulster Wildlife, while day-to-day operational decisions and management is delegated to the Chief Executive, who in turn oversees the staff team of Ulster Wildlife of which there were 36 at the end of March 2023.

All Board Members receive induction training in relation to their role, are provided with a Governance Handbook when they are appointed and adhere to the Code of Good Governance. In addition, in 2022, the Board undertook governance training and carried out a governance review facilitated by Blue Moss consulting. The Board are currently implementing actions arising from this review.

Ulster Wildlife also has an Honorary President, Joe Furphy, who does not have a voting or decision-making role on the Board but contributes to discussions and carries out representation for the Charity.

Details of serving Trustees during 2022/23 can be found to the right.

CHAIRMAN  Ken Brundle (Appointed on 17 September 2013, appointed Chairman on 22 November 2017)	VICE-CHAIR  Stephen Aston Appointed on 07 December 2017, appointed Vice Chairman on 27 September 2018) F & A	VICE-CHAIR  David Sterling (Appointed 16 October 2020, appointed Vice Chair 02 December 2021) E, F & A	HONORARY TREASURER  David Hendron (Appointed on 25 July 2018, appointed Treasurer on 27 September 2018) F & A
COMPANY SECRETARY  Catherine Thompson (Appointed on 14 March 2019, appointed Company Secretary on 18 March 2021) G	COUNCIL MEMBER  Anna Barclay (Appointed 24 November 2020) E, G	COUNCIL MEMBER  Joe Breen (Appointed 9 June 2022) E	COUNCIL MEMBER  Bob Brown (Appointed 16 October 2020) E
COUNCIL MEMBER  Fiona Davey (Appointed on 19 November 2015) G	COUNCIL MEMBER  Stephen Maginn (Appointed 05 December 2019 Resigned 01 Oct 2022) F	COUNCIL MEMBER  Seamus McKee (Appointed 18 March 2021) F	COUNCIL MEMBER  Stephen Smith (Appointed 24 November 2020) F
COUNCIL MEMBER  Helen Surgenor (Appointed 24 November 2020) F	COUNCIL MEMBER  John Wittchell (Appointed on 07 December 2017,) E	COUNCIL MEMBER  Ed Wright (Appointed on 07 October 2015) F	HONORARY PRESIDENT  Joe Furphy



Red squirrel, Co Fermanagh © Adam Gerrard



Pine marten, Co Down © Ronald Surgenor



Green hairstreak butterfly, Slievenacloy Nature Reserve © Ronald Surgenor

Changes to the Ulster Wildlife Council during 2022/2023

Stephen Maginn resigned from Council on 01 October 2022. Joe Breen was confirmed at the AGM on 01 October 2022 after co-option on 09 June 2022.

The governance sub-structure comprises of four sub-committees: Governance, Finance & Audit, Environment and Fundraising. This governance framework is designed to ensure that we are an accountable, effective and efficient charity and to manage risk at the required level.

1. The Governance Committee (G) ensures that the Ulster Wildlife Council fulfils its legal, ethical and functional responsibilities through adequate governance policy development, skills audits, recruitment strategies for Council Members, training programmes, monitoring of Council activities and evaluation of Council's performance, human resources and health & safety management.

2. The Finance & Audit Committee (F&A) supports Council in ensuring that the effective governance of Ulster Wildlife is maintained in relation to: Financial and Physical Resources.

3. The Environment Committee (E) provides ongoing strategic input into the organisation's work linked to nature recovery and community action. The remit of this Committee encompasses nature reserves, environmental projects linked to habitats and/or species, and input into regional policy issues.

4. The Fundraising Committee (F) provides ongoing strategic input to the organisation's fundraising activities - with a focus on unrestricted fundraising.

Statement of Trustees' Responsibilities

The Trustees (who are also the Directors of Ulster Wildlife Trust) are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Annual Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and regulations.

Company and charity law requires the Directors to prepare financial statements for each financial year, which give a true and fair view of the state of the affairs of the charitable company and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the Directors are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently,
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities Statement of Recommended Practice,
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent,
- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements,
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charitable company will continue in operation.

The Trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the charity's transactions and disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and to enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Charities

Act 2008. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Provision of Information to Auditors

Each of the individuals who is a Trustee at the date of approval of this report confirms that:

- so far as they are aware, there is no relevant audit information of which the charity's auditor is unaware; and
- they have taken all the steps that they ought to have taken to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the charity's auditors are aware of that information.

Auditor

DNTCA Limited are deemed to be re-appointed under section 487(2) of the Companies Act 2006. This report was approved by the Board on 31 August 2023 and signed on its behalf by

Ken Brundle
Chairman

David Hendron
Honorary Treasurer



Articles of Association

Ulster Wildlife's charitable objectives as set out in our Articles of Association are:

(1) The advancement of environmental protection and improvement, in particular the conservation of all aspects of Northern Ireland and its adjacent areas' wildlife, biodiversity, geodiversity and associated natural beauty for the benefit of present and future generations by:

(a) safeguarding, maintaining and enhancing natural biodiversity and geodiversity through the management of nature reserves (however entitled or however established);

(b) practising, advocating, encouraging, influencing, advising and campaigning for best conservation practice involving land, sea and freshwater management practice in ways that favour biodiversity, geodiversity, ecosystem health, sustainable use of natural resources and sustainable development;

(c) undertaking action, independently or in partnership, to protect threatened habitats, sites of geodiversity or heritage significance, at local, national or international levels on or in water, land and adjacent seas;

(d) taking account of other aspects of the natural heritage on which wildlife is dependent or to which it contributes, including landforms and landscapes;

(e) improving the quality of life of people through supporting a biodiversity, ecosystem, geodiversity and sustainability led approach to the management and design of the natural and built environment.

(2) The advancement of education by raising the public's awareness and knowledge of all aspects of the natural and built heritage, biodiversity and geodiversity of Northern Ireland and its adjacent areas by promoting, undertaking and co-operating in research and gathering and sharing information on these topics.

(3) The advancement of citizenship through volunteering linked to natural heritage including the promotion of sustainable food production and sustainable lifestyles.

(4) The advancement of the arts, culture, heritage and science linked to natural heritage through events and project-based action.

(5) The advancement of health and well-being through activities linked to the natural environment.

Scarce crimson & gold moth © Adam Mantell

Key Policies & Processes

Managing Risk

Ulster Wildlife Trustees are responsible for overseeing risk management by the charity. They are responsible for ensuring that Ulster Wildlife has an effective system of internal control, management and audit to enable the charity to take advantage of opportunities whilst ensuring that the charity remains protected.

Risk management is well established and is considered in every aspect of our work. We have an active risk management process in place to make sure that appropriate risk assessments are completed and controls are in place to manage and mitigate risk across the organisation.

The Board of Trustees and Senior Management Team work together to ensure that risk is very carefully assessed in relation to the health, welfare, and security of staff, volunteers and the public. As such health & safety risk management is supported by an external consultant.

Risks are also reviewed in the broadest sense and anything that might alter or impact on the charity's ability to fulfil its charitable objectives is considered.

Processes include:

- Risk assessments are completed by all staff to identify, evaluate and manage risks.
- Health & Safety management system including phone app is used to facilitate management and record key information.
- Risk register with mitigation actions is reviewed at least quarterly by the Board.
- Health & Safety is a key factor in selecting external contractors and Health & Safety obligations are included in awarded external contracts.
- Comprehensive risk management reviews are carried out once a year by all subcommittees and are reported to the Board Meeting.
- Multi-year planning, with targets that are linked to delivery of organisational strategy.
- 'Value for Money' principles guide when and where we source goods and services.
- Annual external audit.

The most significant risks identified in 2022/23 were:

- The impacts of climate change on the environment, economy, and people.
- The cost of living crisis and its continued impact on fundraising and running costs for the organisation.
- Staff retention and recruitment.

The cost of living crisis has affected our ability to fundraise and our membership income did decrease slightly this year. A membership growth plan and associated staffing structure, similar to pre-covid levels, has been put into place in an effort to return to membership growth over the coming years. Similarly, the running costs for the charity increased significantly during the year.

Staff turnover was higher than usual during the year due to funding uncertainties and projects ending. This will remain a key issue for the charity to manage particularly with delays in agreement of government funding due to the lack of an Executive in Northern Ireland.

The most significant risks identified for 2023/24 are:

- The cost of living crisis and its continued impact on fundraising.
- Impact of inflationary pressures on running costs.
- Staff retention and recruitment.
- Delays in agreement of funding due to lack of NI Executive in place.

Bumblebee on devil's bit scabious, Slieve Donard Nature Reserve © Ronald Surgenor

Red squirrel © Mark Hamblin 2020 Vision



Our Promise to Our Supporters

At Ulster Wildlife our members, supporters and funders are at the heart of everything we do to help wildlife and wild places thrive in Northern Ireland. That is why, as a registered charity (NIC101848), we are part of the Fundraising Regulator's self-regulatory scheme.

As members of the scheme, we follow the Institute of Fundraising's Codes of Fundraising Practice and comply with the key principles embodied in the Codes. This means when supporters make a donation to us they can be assured that our fundraising is legal, open, honest and respectful.



Our Fundraising Promise

- We are committed to high standards.
- We do all we can to ensure that staff, fundraisers, volunteers and fundraising contractors working with us to raise funds comply with the Code and with this Promise.
- We comply with the law including those that apply to data protection, health and safety and the environment.
- We are honest and open. We tell the truth and do not exaggerate; we do what we say we are going to do.
- We answer all reasonable questions about our fundraising activities and costs.

We are clear

- We are clear about who we are, what we do and how donations are used.
- Where we have a promotional agreement with a commercial company, we make clear how much of the purchase price we receive.
- We give a clear explanation of how a donation can be made and how to amend a regular commitment.

We are respectful

- We respect the rights, dignities and privacy of our supporters and beneficiaries.
- We will not put undue pressure on anyone to make a gift, and if a person does not want to give or wishes to cease giving we will respect that decision.
- If someone tells us that they don't want us to contact them in a particular way we will not do so – our Privacy Notice for Members and Supporters is available on our website at ulsterwildlife.org/privacy-notice

We are accountable

- If anyone is unhappy with anything we have done whilst fundraising, they can contact us to make a complaint at complaints@ulsterwildlife.org. For further information, read our complaints policy.
- If we cannot resolve a complaint, we accept the authority of the Fundraising Regulator to make a final adjudication.

Equal Opportunities and Diversity

Ulster Wildlife aims to be an employer of choice, for people from different backgrounds, and through our Equality in the Workplace policy we promote respect for the individual and equality of opportunity.

Our aim is for our workforce to be truly representative of all sections of the wider community and for each employee to feel respected and able to give their best. Within Ulster Wildlife there is respect for promotion and protection of each individual's human rights. Ulster Wildlife promotes being at ease with all aspects of diversity, built on fairness and respect for all. Decisions about recruitment and selection, promotion, training or any other benefit are made objectively and without unlawful discrimination.

Our Equality in the Workplace policy helps all those who work for us to develop their full potential and ensure that the talents and resources of the workforce are utilised to fully maximise the efficiency of the organisation.

Sustainability

We have set a target to achieve net zero emissions by 2030 and we take sustainability very seriously. We have already commenced the net zero journey, which will be an integral part of our organisational and project planning. All electricity used is renewable and we are in the process of phasing in EVs as budget allows. During the project development phase for new projects, carbon footprint and location of project staff is considered to minimise carbon footprint as by the nature of our work, nature restoration is dispersed throughout Northern Ireland.

A priority for Northern Ireland in terms of the regional carbon budget is to restore damaged peatland and this is a significant delivery strand for the charity. During the year, we purchased a peatland site in Co Tyrone which has been cutover for commercial peat extraction and we are in the process of designing restoration plans for the site, which will be implemented during the next two to three years.

Wider network

Ulster Wildlife is part of a collective of 46 Wildlife Trusts, represented nationally by The Royal Society for Wildlife Trusts (RSWT). The Wildlife Trusts collectively act together, where appropriate, in key policy areas and campaigns.

Financial Management

Financial Reserves Policy

The Trustees recognise there is a balance to be achieved between delivering our charitable objectives and managing the actual and potential risks of failing to meet our liabilities when they fall due. Consequently, the Trustees plan to hold a level of unrestricted financial reserves to provide the necessary resilience to manage these risks.

These risks include, amongst others:

- Loss of funding sources
- Funding delays
- Costs associated with unforeseen closure

The Trustees, having assessed the likelihood of these risks occurring, consider that an unrestricted financial reserve level (excluding designated funds) equal to six months unrestricted payroll and support costs and potential winding up costs should be targeted. The balance on unrestricted reserves as at 31 March 2023, net of unrestricted fixed assets is £642k which meets our target.

Designated Funds

In addition to the above, the Trustees have designated certain unrestricted funds as the 'Fund for the Future'. This money is earmarked to help further the charity's strategic objectives, including the acquisition of nature reserves.

Monitoring and Reviewing

Financial reserve levels are monitored on a quarterly basis throughout the year as a standing item on the Finance Committee's agenda. They also form a part of the finance pack presented to the Board on a quarterly basis.



Razorbill at Isle of Muck Nature Reserve © Ronald Surgenor

Advisors, Senior Personnel and Administrative Details

Auditors	DNT Chartered Accountants Ormeau House 91-97 Ormeau Road Belfast BT7 1SH
Bankers	Danske Bank Belfast Finance Centre PO Box 183 Donegall Square West Belfast BT1 6JS
Company Secretary	Catherine Thompson
Senior Leadership Team	Jennifer Fulton - Chief Executive Officer Dawn Miskelly - Director of Development & Engagement Peter McEvoy - Director of Land Management Niamh Hart - Head of Finance
Charity Registration Number	NIC 101848
Company Registration Number	NI12711
Registered Office and Operational Address	McClelland House 10 Heron Road Belfast BT3 9LE

Independent Auditors' Report to the Members of the Ulster Wildlife Trust

Opinion

We have audited the charity financial statements of Ulster Wildlife Trust ('the charity') for the financial year ended 31 March 2023 which comprise the Statement of Financial Activities (incorporating an Income and Expenditure Account), the Balance Sheet, the Statement of Cash Flows and notes to the financial statements, including the summary of significant accounting policies set out in note 2. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including FRS 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland" and Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with FRS 102.

In our opinion when reporting in accordance with a fair presentation framework the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the charity's affairs as at 31 March 2023 and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice;
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the charity in accordance with ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled

our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the charity's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from the date when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the trustees with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

Other information

The other information comprises the information included in the annual report other than the financial statements and our Auditor's Report thereon. The trustees are responsible for the other information contained within the annual report. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

Our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the course of the audit, or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether this gives rise to a material

misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact. We have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinion on other matter prescribed by the Companies Act 2006

In our opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit:

- the information given in the Trustees Annual Report for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements; and
- the Trustees Annual Report has been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

In the light of the knowledge and understanding of the charity and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified material misstatements in the Trustees Annual Report.

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the Companies Act 2006 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept; or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- certain disclosures of trustees' remuneration specified by law are not made.



Independent Auditors' Report to the Members of the Ulster Wildlife Trust

Responsibilities of trustees for the financial statements

As explained more fully in the Statement of Trustees' Responsibilities, the trustees are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as they determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the trustees are responsible for assessing the charity's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless management either intends to liquidate the charity or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an Auditor's Report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We design procedures in line with our responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of irregularities, including fraud. The extent to which our procedures are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud is detailed below:

Our approach to identifying and assessing the risks of material

misstatement in respect of irregularities, including fraud and non compliance with laws and regulations, was as follows:

- The engagement partner ensured that the engagement team collectively had the appropriate competence, capabilities and skills to identify or recognise non-compliance with applicable laws and regulations;
- We identified the laws and regulations applicable to the company through discussions with directors and other management,
- We focused on specific laws and regulations which we considered may have a direct material effect on the financial statements or the operations of the company,

To address the risk of fraud through management bias and override of controls, we:

- Performed analytical procedures to identify any unusual or unexpected relationships;
- Investigated the rationale behind significant or unusual transactions.

In response to the risk of irregularities and non-compliance with laws and regulations, we designed procedures which included, but were not limited to:

- Agreeing financial statement disclosures to underlying supporting documentation;
- Reading the minutes of meetings of those charged with governance;
- Enquiring of management as to actual and potential litigation and claims;
- Reviewing correspondence with HMRC, Companies House and the company's legal advisors.

Greater butterfly orchid, Slieve Donard Nature Reserve © Ronald Surgenor



Independent Auditors' Report to the Members of the Ulster Wildlife Trust

Further information regarding the scope of our responsibilities as auditor

As part of an audit in accordance with ISAs (UK), we exercise professional judgement and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. We also:

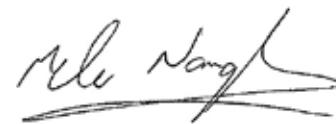
- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the charity's internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by trustees.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of the trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the charity's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our Auditor's Report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our Auditor's Report. However, future events or conditions may cause the charity to cease to continue as a going concern.

- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

The purpose of our audit work and to whom we owe our responsibilities

This report is made solely to the charity's members, as a body, in accordance with Chapter 3 of Part 16 of the Companies Act 2006. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charity's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charity and the charity's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.



Mr M Nangle (Senior Statutory Auditor) for and on behalf of **DNTCA Limited, Ormeau House, 91-97 Ormeau Road, Belfast, BT7 1SH.**

Six-spot burnet moth, Slieve Donard Nature Reserve © Ronald Surgenor

Statement of Financial Activities (including income and expenditure account) for the year ended 31 March 2023

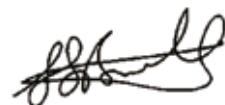
	Notes	Unrestricted Fund £	Restricted Fund £	2023 Total Funds £	2022 Total Funds £
INCOME FROM:					
Donations & Legacies	3	452,709	72,647	525,356	538,105
Conservation Activities	4	-	1,918,730	1,918,730	2,178,277
Agri-environment Payments		28,242	-	28,242	29,034
Charitable Activities - Landfill Contributions	5	-	227,085	227,085	337,392
Education & Training Activities	6	-	313,655	313,655	313,680
Interest Received	7	3,971	2,901	6,872	2,984
Other Income	8	176,818	41,880	218,698	247,950
TOTAL INCOME		661,740	2,576,898	3,238,638	3,647,422
EXPENDITURE ON					
Raising Funds	9	80,453	-	80,453	90,732
Charitable Activities	10	780,520	1,853,219	2,633,739	2,897,091
TOTAL EXPENDITURE		860,973	1,853,219	2,714,192	2,987,823
NET INCOME BEFORE TRANSFERS AND FOREIGN EXCHANGE					
		(199,233)	723,679	524,446	659,599
Gains/(losses) from Foreign Exchange		(871)	-	(871)	(5,237)
Transfers Between Funds	14	223,262	(223,262)	-	-
NET MOVEMENT IN FUNDS		23,158	500,417	523,575	654,362
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS:					
Total Funds at 1 April 2022		1,178,771	1,485,935	2,664,706	2,010,344
Transfer (from)/to Designated Fund for the Future		(3,192)	3,192	-	-
TOTAL FUNDS AT 31 MARCH 2023		1,198,737	1,989,544	3,188,281	2,664,706

The notes on pages 40 to 43 form part of these financial statements.
The Statement of financial activities includes all gains and losses in the year.
All income and expenditure derives from continuing activities.

Statement of Financial Position at 31 March 2023

	Notes	Unrestricted Fund £	Restricted Fund £	2023 Total Funds £	2022 Total Funds £
FIXED ASSETS					
Tangible Assets	16	325,038	1,501,703	1,826,741	1,670,011
CURRENT ASSETS					
Debtors	17	104,934	121,872	226,806	717,915
Cash at Bank and in Hand		928,421	1,148,467	2,076,888	1,703,260
		1,033,355	1,270,339	2,303,694	2,421,175
CURRENT LIABILITIES					
Creditors	18	151,549	439,682	591,231	1,074,551
NET CURRENT ASSETS		881,806	830,657	1,712,463	1,346,624
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES		1,206,844	2,332,360	3,539,204	3,016,635
CREDITORS due in more than 1 year					
Capital Grants	19	8,107	342,816	350,923	351,929
		1,198,737	1,989,544	3,188,281	2,664,706
FINANCIAL RESERVES					
General Fund	20	989,251	-	989,251	988,414
Fund for the Future	22	209,486	-	209,486	190,357
Restricted Funds	21	-	1,989,544	1,989,544	1,485,935
		1,198,737	1,989,544	3,188,281	2,664,706

These financial statements were approved and signed by the members of the board and authorised for issue on 31st August 2023



Ken Brundle, Chairman



David Hendron, Honorary Treasurer

The notes on pages 40 to 43 form part of these financial statements.
Company Registration Number: NI 12711

Statement of Cash Flows for year ending 31 March 2023

	2023	2022
	£	£
Cash Flows from operating activities		
Net Income/(Expenditure)	524,446	659,599
<i>Adjustments for</i>		
Depreciation of Tangible Fixed Assets	25,982	7,995
Increase/(Decrease) in Deferred Capital Grant	(1,006)	(1,006)
(Increase)/Decrease in Trade and Other Debtors	491,109	(383,485)
Increase/(Decrease) in Trade and Other Creditors	(483,320)	837,627
Net Cash (used in)/from Operating Activities	557,211	1,120,730
Cash Flows from Investing Activities		
Purchase of Tangible Assets	(187,508)	(801,065)
Disposal of Tangible Assets	4,796	20,961
Net Cash used in Investing Activities	(182,712)	(780,104)
Net Increase /(Decrease) in Cash and Cash Equivalents	374,499	340,626
Cash and Cash Equivalents at Beginning of the Year	1,703,260	1,367,871
Net Increase/(Decrease) in Cash and Cash Equivalents due to Exchange Rate Movements	(871)	(5,237)
Cash and Cash Equivalents at End of the Year	2,076,888	1,703,260

Notes to the accounts

1 Statement of Compliance

These financial statements have been prepared in compliance with FRS102, 'The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and the Republic of Ireland', 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 (Charities SORP (FRS102)) and the Charities Act 2008.

2 Accounting Policies

Basis of preparation

The financial statements have been prepared on the historical cost basis, as modified by the revaluation of certain financial assets and liabilities measured at fair value through income or expenditure.

The financial statements are prepared in sterling, which is the functional currency of the entity.

Going concern

There are no material uncertainties about the charity's ability to continue.

Fund accounting

Unrestricted funds are available for use, at the discretion of the trustees, to further any of the charity's purposes.

Restricted funds are subject to restrictions on their expenditure declared by the donor or funder or through the terms of an appeal.

Incoming resources

All incoming resources are included in the statement of financial activities when entitlement has passed to the charity; it is probable that the economic benefits associated with the transaction will flow to the charity and the amount can be reliably measured. The following specific policies are applied to particular categories of income:

- income from donations or grants is recognised when there is evidence of entitlement to the gift, receipt is probable and its amount can be measured reliably.
- legacy income is recognised when receipt is probable and entitlement is established.
- income from contracts for the supply of services is recognised with the delivery of the contracted service.

These are classified as unrestricted funds unless there is a contractual requirement for it to be spent on a particular purpose and returned if unspent, in which case it is regarded as restricted.

Resources expended

Expenditure is recognised on an accruals basis as a liability is incurred. Expenditure is classified under headings of the statement of financial activities to which it relates:

- expenditure on raising funds includes the costs of all fundraising activities.

- expenditure on charitable activities includes all costs incurred by the charity in undertaking activities that further its charitable aims for the benefit of its beneficiaries, including those support costs and costs relating to the governance of the charity.

All costs are allocated to expenditure categories reflecting the use of the resource. Direct costs attributable to a single activity are allocated directly to that activity. Shared costs are apportioned between the activities they contribute to on a reasonable, justifiable and consistent basis.

Depreciation

Purchased assets, which individually exceed £1000 at cost are included in the balance sheet at historic cost less depreciation and any impairment in accordance with FRS 102.

Fixed Assets are depreciated over the period of their useful lives as follows:

Land	not depreciated
Buildings	2.5% straight-line
Equipment	10% straight line
Computers	25% straight line
Vehicles - cars and vans	15% straight line

Depreciation for specialist conservation equipment with limited resale value would normally be depreciated over the lifetime of the project in which they are used.

Grants

Government and other grants are recognised at the fair value of the asset received or receivable. Grants are not recognised until there is reasonable assurance that the charity will comply with the conditions attaching to them and the grants will be received.

Foreign currency

Transactions in foreign currencies are translated at rates prevailing at the date of the transaction.

Pensions

Ulster Wildlife operates a defined contribution pension scheme and matches employee contributions to the scheme at a maximum rate of 7% of salary.

Taxation

The organisation is a registered charity with HMRC and is therefore not liable for taxation to the extent that any surplus or gains arising are wholly applied to its charitable objects.

The company is registered for VAT. Much of the income is either exempt or outside the scope of VAT.

Consequently, it is not possible to recover most of the VAT incurred on expenditure. Income and expenditure are shown exclusive of recoverable VAT.

Notes to the accounts

3 Donations & Legacies

	Unrestricted Funds 2023 £	Restricted Funds 2023 £	Unrestricted Funds 2022 £	Restricted Funds 2022 £
Legacy & In Memory Giving	3,320	-	61,166	-
Membership Contributions inc. Gift Aid	416,757	-	420,319	-
Corporate Support	26,491	58,500	7,500	10,000
Other Gifts & Donations	6,141	14,147	28,919	10,201
	452,709	72,647	517,904	20,201

4 Conservation Grants

	Unrestricted Funds 2023 £	Restricted Funds 2023 £	Unrestricted Funds 2022 £	Restricted Funds 2022 £
DAERA Environment Fund	-	1,092,606	-	1,257,842
DAERA Maritime and Fisheries Fund	-	47,625	-	-
Department for Infrastructure Living Places and Spaces Fund	-	10,000	-	-
Environmental Farming Scheme	-	231,641	-	195,673
Esmée Fairbairn Foundation	-	103,250	-	150,000
EU- Interreg VA	-	247,531	-	410,941
Garfield Weston Foundation	-	30,000	-	30,000
Kreitman Foundation	-	11,600	-	15,000
Landfill Communities Fund	-	2,167	-	4,419
Marine Institute	-	1,623	-	1,617
Ministry of Defence	-	14,249	-	17,684
National Lottery Heritage Fund	-	116,438	-	92,307
Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts	-	10,000	-	-
Save Our Seas Foundation	-	-	-	2,794
	-	1,918,730	-	2,178,277

5 Landfill Environmental Projects

	Unrestricted Funds 2023 £	Restricted Funds 2023 £	Unrestricted Funds 2022 £	Restricted Funds 2022 £
Landfill Contributions Received	-	227,085	-	337,392
	-	227,085	-	337,392
Expenditure				
Entrust Administration Fee	-	8,084	-	9,818
Direct Project Expenditure	-	276,178	-	238,944
Direct Costs	20,166	-	30,490	-
	20,166	284,262	30,490	248,762

Notes to the accounts

6 Education & Training Grants

	Unrestricted Funds 2023 £	Restricted Funds 2023 £	Unrestricted Funds 2022 £	Restricted Funds 2022 £
DAERA Environment Fund	-	-	-	35,744
Department for Communities (JobStart Scheme)	-	60,471	-	12,012
Department for Communities (Covid Recovery Employment and Skills Initiative for Heritage)	-	44,249	-	-
Education Authority	-	7,445	-	31,332
European Solidarity Corps	-	13,201	-	-
National Lottery Community Fund (Our Environment, Our Future)	-	22,768	-	74,124
National Lottery Community Fund (People & Communities)	-	74,761	-	60,263
National Lottery Community Fund (Empowering Young People 3)	-	61,282	-	31,226
National Lottery Heritage Fund	-	29,478	-	58,829
Other	-	-	150	10,000
	-	313,655	150	313,530

7 Interest Received

Interest received in Restricted Funds is the interest earned on landfill tax receipts held prior to disbursement, and interest received which is used to fund expenditure on nature reserves. Interest received in unrestricted funds is bank interest earned on other cash balances.

8 Other Income

	Unrestricted Funds 2023 £	Restricted Funds 2023 £	Unrestricted Funds 2022 £	Restricted Funds 2022 £
Esmée Fairbairn Foundation Core Funding	110,000	-	75,000	-
Consultancy	20,198	-	34,495	63,891
Furlough Income	-	-	7,312	-
Sundry income	46,620	41,880	42,281	24,971
	176,818	41,880	159,088	88,862

9 Expenditure on Raising Donations & Legacies

	Unrestricted Funds 2023 £	Restricted Funds 2023 £	Unrestricted Funds 2022 £	Restricted Funds 2022 £
Travel	62	-	-	-
Professional Fees	92	-	-	-
Printed Materials, Misc	14,338	-	10,369	-
Wages & Salary Costs	65,961	-	80,363	-
	80,453	-	90,732	-

Notes to the accounts

10 Charitable Activities

	Unrestricted Funds 2023 £	Restricted Funds 2023 £	Total Funds 2023 £	Total Funds 2022 £
Landfill Environmental Projects	20,167	284,262	304,429	279,252
Nature Conservation	227,489	1,355,435	1,582,924	1,912,891
Environmental Education & Training	73,714	158,128	231,842	285,336
Membership Support Costs	106,115	-	106,115	75,251
Organisation Support Costs	325,698	43,965	369,663	307,847
Depreciation	17,503	12,270	29,773	24,791
Bank Interest & Charges	5,109	-	5,109	4,784
Auditors Remuneration	4,725	-	4,725	3,780
(Profit)/Loss on Disposal of Fixed Asset	-	(841)	(841)	3,159
	780,520	1,853,219	2,633,739	2,897,091

11 Expenditure on Charitable Activities

	Staff Costs £	Other direct costs £	2023 £	2022 £
Landfill Environmental Projects	16,130	288,298	304,428	279,252
Nature Conservation	678,958	903,966	1,582,924	1,912,891
Environmental Education	203,329	28,514	231,843	285,336
Membership Support Costs	46,042	60,073	106,115	75,251
Organisation Support Costs	192,359	177,304	369,663	307,847
Other- Depreciation, Bank Charges, Audit.	-	38,766	38,766	36,514
	1,136,818	1,496,921	2,633,739	2,897,091

Other Direct costs Environmental Projects	Landfill Environmental Projects £	Nature Conservation Projects £	Environmental Education Projects £	Membership & Organisation Support Costs £	Total £
Direct Project Costs	284,262	114,056	15,490	15,373	429,181
Premises Costs	4,036	24,433	1,280	115,701	145,450
Postage, Printing & Stationery	-	3,869	522	41,385	45,776
Staff Travel and Vehicle Costs	-	63,060	2,146	15,125	80,331
Contracted Services	-	666,125	2,440	15,713	684,278
Staff Training	-	16,847	4,210	2,316	23,373
Council Costs	-	-	-	4,281	4,281
Information Technology	-	15,576	2,426	27,483	45,485
	288,298	903,966	28,514	237,377	1,458,155

Notes to the accounts

12 Depreciation

	Unrestricted Funds 2023 £	Restricted Funds 2023 £	Unrestricted Funds 2022 £	Restricted Funds 2022 £
Motor Vehicles	3,499	12,270	3,499	6,499
Equipment	5,759	-	6,548	-
Buildings	8,245	-	8,245	-
	17,503	12,270	18,292	6,499

13 Staff Costs

	2023 £	2022 £
Salaries and Wages	1,044,198	1,033,452
Social Security Costs	93,964	91,548
Pension Contributions	64,617	73,321
	1,202,779	1,198,321

One employee received emoluments of more than £60,000. The average number of employees during the year, calculated on the basis of full time equivalents, was 33.6. (2022- 36.5).

The key management personnel comprise the trustees and the members of the senior management team.

The total employee benefits of the key management personnel was £287,960. (2022: £271,838).

14 Transfer Between Funds

	2023 £	2022 £
Landfill Fund Administration Costs	20,166	30,490
Project Contribution to Organisation Support Costs	213,101	160,530
Conservation Work at Glendun	-	2,107
Match Funding for DAERA Funding	(10,005)	(20,733)
	223,262	172,394

15 Board Remuneration and Related Party Transactions

Helen Surgenor was appointed to the Board in the year to 31 March 2022. She is the spouse of a current staff member.

No members of the Board received any remuneration during the year in their capacity as Trustees.

No travel and subsistence costs were paid on behalf of trustees during the year. (2022 £NIL).

No travel and subsistence costs were paid to trustees during the year. (2022 £NIL).

No trustees received payment for professional services supplied to the charity (2022 £NIL).

No balances are owed to trustees at 31st March 2023.

Notes to the accounts

16 Fixed Assets

	Nature Reserves £	Land & Buildings £	Motor Vehicles £	Equipment & Computers £	TOTAL £
COST OR VALUATION					
At 1 April 2022	1,161,966	589,355	149,464	76,674	1,977,459
Additions	78,192	-	22,399	86,917	187,508
Disposals	-	-	-	(4,796)	(4,796)
At 31 March 2023	1,240,158	589,355	171,863	158,795	2,160,171
DEPRECIATION					
At 1 April 2022	-	165,285	83,613	58,550	307,448
Charge for year	-	8,245	16,774	5,759	30,778
Disposals	-	-	-	(4,796)	(4,796)
At 31 March 2023	-	173,530	100,387	59,513	333,430
NBV at 31 March 2023	1,240,158	415,825	71,476	99,282	1,826,741
<i>including restricted assets of</i>	<i>1,200,158</i>	<i>150,000</i>	<i>64,628</i>	<i>86,917</i>	<i>1,501,703</i>

Glendun farm has been included at probate value of £150,000.

17 Debtors

	Unrestricted Funds 2023 £	Restricted Funds 2023 £	Unrestricted Funds 2022 £	Restricted Funds 2022 £
Debtors and Prepayments	85,958	73,530	68,901	10,349
Grants	-	48,342	118,405	499,575
Tax Refunds Due	18,976	-	20,685	-
	104,934	121,872	207,991	509,924

18 Creditors Falling Due Within One Year

	Unrestricted Funds 2023 £	Restricted Funds 2023 £	Unrestricted Funds 2022 £	Restricted Funds 2022 £
<i>Sundry Creditors and Accrued Expenditure</i>	<i>151,549</i>	<i>439,682</i>	<i>77,373</i>	<i>997,178</i>

A specific provision has been created in the year of £60k for roof repairs identified as necessary at McClelland House.

19 Creditors Falling Due After More Than One Year

	Unrestricted Funds 2023 £	Restricted Funds 2023 £	Unrestricted Funds 2022 £	Restricted Funds 2022 £
<i>Capital Grants</i>	<i>8,107</i>	<i>342,816</i>	<i>9,113</i>	<i>342,816</i>

Notes to the accounts

20 Movement on Unrestricted Funds

	Unrestricted Funds 2023 £	Unrestricted Funds 2022 £
Opening Balance	988,414	942,333
Surplus for the Year	23,158	127,247
Transfer to Fund for the Future	(22,321)	(81,166)
Closing Balance	989,251	988,414

21 Movement on Restricted Funds

	Restricted Funds 2023 £	Restricted Funds 2022 £
Opening Balance	1,485,935	790,226
Net Income/(Expenditure) for the year	500,417	527,115
Transfer from/(to) Fund for the Future	3,192	168,594
Closing Balance	1,989,544	1,485,935

Some funders pay in advance and other funders issue payment only after the expenditure has been incurred. The movement on restricted funds in any year is a result of timing differences between receipts of grants for restricted projects and the related expenditure.

22 Movement on Fund for the Future

	Designated Fund for the Future 2023 £	Designated Fund for the Future 2022 £
Opening Balance	190,357	277,785
Income from Donations and Legacies	22,321	81,166
UW Contribution to the Purchase of Land	(3,192)	(168,594)
Closing Balance	209,486	190,357

Fund for the Future includes monies from gifts in wills and legacy donations and other donations, including restricted donations. It will be used to purchase and manage nature reserves, protect key species as well as educate and support future wildlife champions.

23 Contingent Liability

A portion of grants received may become repayable if the charity fails to comply with the terms of the relevant letters of offer.

24 Taxation

As a charity, Ulster Wildlife Trust is exempt from tax on income and gains to the extent that these are applied to its charitable objects. Ulster Wildlife is registered for VAT in relation to some specific taxable supplies. The net amount payable on taxable supplies was £13,496 in the period (2022 £13,750).

25 Company Status

Ulster Wildlife Trust Limited is a private company limited by guarantee and consequently does not have share capital. Each of the members is liable to contribute an amount not exceeding £1 towards the assets of the company in the event of liquidation.



School children at the launch of Glenam native oyster nursery



Ulster Wildlife is Northern Ireland's largest local nature conservation charity. We are working to bring nature back across Northern Ireland and secure a wilder future where people and nature are thriving together.

Join us now and together we can make a real difference
www.ulsterwildlife.org/join-us

Get in touch

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We are proud to be one of **46 independent Wildlife Trusts** working across the UK

part of



Ulster Wildlife Trust, (operating as Ulster Wildlife) is registered with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland NIC101848 and is a not-for-profit company incorporated in Northern Ireland, limited by guarantee NI 12711.

Annual return

Our Year for Nature, People and Climate

Ulster Wildlife Trust

**Annual Report &
Accounts 22-23**



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Foreword

During 2022-23, as a charity, we have overcome great challenges to produce extremely positive results for nature, people and climate.

With the introduction of our bold new strategy to 2030 to tackle the nature and climate crises and meet local, regional and international targets, our top priority has been to explore new and innovative ways to scale up our work for nature's recovery, taking a lead from international best practice and research. From launching our second native oyster nursery at Glenarm and purchasing a peatland restoration demonstration site in Co. Tyrone to securing long-term funding from DAERA to scale up peatland restoration in Northern Ireland – we have started to lay the groundwork for achieving our ambition. This work also allows us to showcase, educate and collaborate on the benefits of nature-based solutions and the role our natural habitats can play in addressing climate change, and benefitting people's health and wellbeing.

Our work to bring wildlife back gained momentum as we celebrated a successful breeding year for our most iconic farmland bird the barn owl, played a role in introducing red squirrels to Castle Ward Estate, and conducted research showing the phenomenal expansion of pine martens across Northern Ireland. These 'good news' stories received widespread media coverage and captured people's hearts and minds, helping to raise our profile and grow our supporter base – more essential than ever if we are to make a real difference.

Despite another turbulent year for politics, our campaigning and advocacy work witnessed several notable successes including the historic passing of Northern Ireland's Climate Change Act, thanks to campaigning by our supporters and fellow environmental charities. We also responded to a procession of consultations and key threats affecting nature, most notably the UK Retained EU Law Bill.

Mobilising and empowering communities to take meaningful action for nature and climate was lifted to new heights with the launch of the 'Nextdoor Nature' project in south and east Belfast. Our Youth Forum also continues to grow from strength to strength with public engagement campaigns such as 'Let Nature In' helping us achieve our goal of one in four people taking action for nature.

Of course, none of this work would be possible without the dedication and unstinting efforts of the staff and volunteer team, and our skilled Board Members along with the continued and vital support from our loyal members, supporters, businesses, partners, and funders.

Thank you!



Jennifer Fulton

Jennifer Fulton
Chief Executive Officer of Ulster Wildlife



Ken Brundle

Ken Brundle
Chair of Ulster Wildlife

Highlights of our year for wildlife



© Ronald Surgenor

April 22

Launched new Strategy to 2030 to 'bring nature back'

Nature is in crisis and declining at rates unprecedented in human history. Our new strategy for a wilder future by 2030 sets out our vision of a thriving natural world with nature in recovery, where everyone is inspired to get involved, and where wildlife plays a key role in addressing the nature and climate emergencies. Together, and with the support of local communities, businesses, farmers, landowners and our members who stand with us, we are in the best place possible to turn our vision into a reality – and ensure the recovery of our natural world. Read our strategy: ulsterwildlife.org/publications



May 22

Nextdoor Nature launched to empower local communities to help nature flourish

Thanks to funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Nextdoor Nature is bringing people together in south and east Belfast to help nature flourish. We are supporting communities to put their ideas into action and make small changes on their doorsteps that will help put nature into recovery. Micro-projects are being brought to life in places where green spaces and access to nature have eroded over time, driven by galvanised communities who are finding a new passion for wildlife.



June 22

Climate Change Act becomes law

After years of campaigning with other environmental organisations, our Youth Forum, the public, and with support from our members, Northern Ireland finally has a Climate Change Act. This was a historic moment – just over two years after the Assembly declared a 'Climate Emergency' – and is the first-ever legislation in Northern Ireland to drive forward action to tackle the climate and nature crises. The Act includes a target of net-zero by 2050, 'Just Transition' principles including a fund to support agriculture, a nature-based solutions amendment, and provision for a Climate Commissioner.



© Scottish Shark Tagging Programme

July 22

Four years of shark conservation celebrated

Our four-year project to safeguard the future of endangered sharks, skates and rays (elasmobranchs) ended with some fantastic achievements. We trained and supported dedicated anglers to become tagging champions. We also trained 80 anglers in best practice handling techniques with over 640 shark, skates, and rays tagged and recorded. This tagging data, alongside over 4,000 eggcase records submitted by the public, provides vital information needed to protect important elasmobranch nursery and pupping grounds.



© Philip McErlean

August 22

Record lizard sightings at Slievenacloy Nature Reserve

Our Slievenacloy Nature Reserve, in the Belfast Hills, is the perfect hotspot for the common lizard – Ireland's only native reptile – where it can be seen basking on old fence posts, paths and rocks on warm days. Last summer, lizard surveyor Philip McErlean, spotted a total of 48 common lizards – 18 adults and 30 neonates – a record for one day.



© Jon Hawkins Surrey Hills Photography

September 22

New online sightings portal goes live

We launched a new online recording facility so that the public can submit their sightings of red squirrel, barn owl, and pine marten – three key Northern Ireland priority species we are focusing our conservation efforts on to help reverse their fortunes. Sightings of these three key species, along with grey squirrels and long-eared owls, will help us build a better picture of their distribution across Northern Ireland, so we can target our work more effectively. Record your sightings: ulsterwildlife.org/record-sightings

Highlights of our year for wildlife



© Ronald Sargen

October 22

Turning the tide to save the Irish Sea

We joined forces with other conservation bodies in the Irish Sea region to find solutions to the challenges nature is facing across the Irish Sea. The Irish Sea is incredibly rich in wildlife but heavily used with limited protection and proper management. Together, we produced a Review of the Irish Sea 2022 which laid down our vision and calls to action to protect and improve its health. We want to see collaboration across national borders to achieve a well-managed and ecologically coherent network of Marine Protected Areas and truly sustainable fisheries.



© Mark Hamblin 2020 VISION

November 22

Defend Nature campaign launched

The introduction of the proposed Retained EU Law Bill, which could see vital pieces of environmental legislation of EU-origin scrapped, required a rapid response to ensure decades of wins for wildlife and wild places were not lost. We joined forces with fellow environmental charities to send a joint letter to NI Ministers as well as engaging with key local politicians to speak out against this Bill. We also worked with The Wildlife Trusts to mobilise public support in the form of letters and a postcard campaign to MP constituency offices.



© Ronald Sargen

December 22

Launch of annual appeal for seabird conservation

To help match-fund the purchase of a new boat for our seabird conservation on our Isle of Muck Nature Reserve, off Islandmagee, we appealed to our members and supporters to raise £5,000. This natural treasure is home to the third largest colony of cliff nesting seabirds in Northern Ireland, from razorbills to kittiwakes. Owning our own vessel enables us to step-up essential conservation work when it's needed the most, respond to incidents quickly, and undertake more regular seabird monitoring. We were thrilled to raise over £10,000, thanks to our supporters. 'Tystie' made its maiden voyage in February with the additional funds raised helping to purchase essential boat equipment.



© Adam Gerrard

January 23

Red squirrel release at Castle Ward sparks hope for iconic mammal

Four red squirrels were successfully introduced to Castle Ward estate, outside Strangford, in a bid to establish a new population of this key native species. The introduction was part of an ongoing effort between the National Trust, Ulster Wildlife, Belfast Zoo, Northern Ireland Environment Agency and the Heart of Down Red Squirrel Group to secure the long-term future of this iconic mammal. The location was carefully chosen as it has ample woodland habitat and, most importantly, it is free from invasive grey squirrels – the biggest threat to the red squirrels' survival.



© Giles Knight

February 23

Collaboration with farmers in Leitrim

Our Fermanagh Environmental Farming Scheme Group collaborated with Leitrim Sustainable Agriculture Group including a series of reciprocal farm visits. This helped improve understanding of the importance and challenges of farming wet species-rich grasslands that deliver for nature and are unique to this border region. The collaboration also resulted in good sharing of ideas and joint bids for Shared Island funding of which we await the outcome.



March 23

Positive breeding year celebrated for barn owls

One of our most vulnerable farmland birds, the barn owl, had a positive breeding year in 2022. Twenty-four barn owl chicks fledged from eight known breeding pairs – a significant increase in chicks from 2021. Two new nest sites were also discovered in Co Down helping to boost the bird's fragile population, which is estimated to be less than 30 breeding pairs. Barn owls were badly hit in 2021, as the wet spring and hot summer resulted in a poor breeding season, so this is welcome news for our struggling population. Read the 2022 barn owl report: ulsterwildlife.org/barn-owls



Small heath butterfly at Slievenacloy Nature Reserve © Ronald Surgenor

Bringing nature back

Our new strategy to put nature into recovery by 2030 has ambitious goals and builds upon our work over the last 45 years to deliver impactful change for nature. It drives us towards our vision of a wilder future, where everyone is inspired to get involved in nature's recovery, and where wildlife plays a key role in addressing the nature and climate emergencies. Although it is a bold and complex challenge, it is a necessity — and the solution to the very real and present dangers that nature and people face in the midst of a climate and nature emergency.

Our ability to galvanize people to take action, to work collaboratively to achieve the greatest impact for nature, and our knowledge, experience, 'localness' and innovative ways of working, are our core strengths. Together, and with the support of local communities, farmers, landowners, businesses, and our members who stand with us, we are in the best place possible to turn our vision into a reality — and ensure the recovery of our natural world.

Public Benefit

- The Trustees of Ulster Wildlife have taken into account the Charity Commission's guidance on Public Benefit, and consider it fully when planning and reviewing the charity's actions and outcomes and in planning our future activities.
- This Trustees' Report shows how we performed against our strategic outcomes in 2022/23.
- Ulster Wildlife's charitable objectives as set out in our Articles of Association can be found on page 32.

Our Vision

A wilder future where people and nature are thriving together

Our Purpose

Our purpose is to protect and restore nature on land and at sea. We will play our part in ending the climate and ecological emergencies, creating a society where nature is valued and is part of our daily lives.

Our Strategic Outcomes for 2030

1. NATURE - Nature is in recovery and wildlife is thriving across Northern Ireland.

2. PEOPLE - More people are taking positive action for nature and climate and are benefiting from time spent in nature.

3. CLIMATE - Nature-based solutions are playing a central role in addressing climate change.

Outcome 1 Nature

Nature is in recovery and wildlife is thriving across Northern Ireland

With one in ten species at risk of extinction here, we need to reverse the decline and bring nature back. It has become clear that protecting what we have left is no longer enough. It is our aim to create new spaces for nature by connecting habitats and restoring landscapes, and by working collaboratively to help species and habitats recover.

857 hectares of land managed for wildlife (equivalent to 2,116 football pitches)

400 farmers and landowners received advice

40k ha of farms whose management we influenced.

108 gardens surveyed by the public for hedgehogs

Barn owl chick, Co Down



Barn Owls

With fewer than 30 breeding pairs of barns owls in Northern Ireland, we continued to carry out a range of conservation actions to help this iconic farmland bird recover.

Barn owls faced a challenging breeding season in 2021, so we were delighted to receive more positive news in 2022. Across Northern Ireland, at known nest sites, there were eight broods, resulting in 24 chicks fledging – a considerable increase compared to the previous year. A number of new nest sites were also discovered in nest boxes that we had previously erected, in collaboration with volunteers and partners.

Twenty additional nest boxes were installed in strategic locations during the winter to help barn owls from existing nests expand their range to these newly established sites. Our aim is to create a network of nest boxes and suitable barn owl habitats across the country, which will enable this priority species to recover, spread and ultimately thrive using the 'Nature Recovery Network' approach.

We received substantial interest from landowners eager to help and conducted 34 on-site visits to assess farms for their suitability as barn owl habitats, providing valuable land management advice in the process.

Additionally, we received a considerable number of barn owl and long-eared owl sightings and launched a new sightings database to help streamline the recording process.

Red squirrel © Ronald Surgenor



Red Squirrels

Following the launch of our Red Squirrel Conservation Strategy for Northern Ireland, we have been actively supporting local red squirrel groups in their conservation efforts. We have also been collaborating with local councils to assist them in implementing measures to safeguard this priority species.

To ensure the long-term monitoring of red squirrels, pine martens, and grey squirrels, our dedicated staff, volunteers, and external partners conducted a comprehensive survey to determine their presence or absence across Northern Ireland. Woodlands were surveyed across Northern Ireland – 218 in total – revealing a significant rise in pine marten presence over the last five years.

To help simplify data collection and to inform conservation action, we developed and launched a new sightings database for the public to record red squirrels, grey squirrels and pine martens. A grey squirrel control database was also developed for volunteers.

Additionally, we collaborated with the Northern Ireland Squirrel Forum and the National Trust to successfully introduce red squirrels to the Castle Ward estate.

Hedgehog survey at Slievenacloy Nature Reserve



Hedgehogs

We teamed up again with NUI Galway last year for the Irish Hedgehog Survey to help find out more about these much-loved mammals. This citizen science project encourages the public to submit sightings of hedgehogs and carry out surveys using footprint tunnels and camera traps.

Over 1,000 people in Northern Ireland signed up to take part in the survey, which ran from May to September, with sightings collected all year round. In total, 390 hedgehog sightings were submitted – a huge increase since the survey began in 2020. Sixteen hedgehog talks and workshops were delivered, with 70 people trained in the survey methodology.

Along with a number of other organisations, we carried out 15 Local Area Surveys; these consisted of 10 tunnels placed in a 1km square for five nights. A number of our nature reserves were surveyed including Balloo, Bog Meadows, Slievenacloy and Glenarm. We had a fantastic uptake from the public and our members with 108 surveys carried out in people's gardens. This data is important to establish a baseline for hedgehogs and build a better picture of their distribution, so we can work to secure their future.

We have also been raising awareness of hedgehogs and encouraging people to create hedgehog-friendly gardens through our 'Let Nature In' wildlife gardening campaign.

Tystie transporting sheep to Isle of Muck Nature Reserve



Nature Reserves

Our nature reserves cover nearly 850 hectares of land spread across 19 sites that include some of Northern Ireland's most important habitats and species. From a small field in the Glens of Antrim safeguarding a rare plant to a vast expanse of wilderness in the Belfast Hills, our nature reserves are equally important in their conservation efforts.

A key highlight of the year was the acquisition of a new boat named 'Tystie' to aid our seabird conservation work at the Isle of Muck – our sincere thanks to everyone who generously donated to our appeal. At Glenullin Bog, monitoring of our efforts to raise water levels through damming and bunding yielded positive results, confirming the first steps in the restoration of this 45-hectare lowland raised bog.

As is the nature of the natural world, it was a year of highs and lows for many priority species we help to protect. There were record counts of small eggar moth webs at Umbra, while nesting kittiwakes hit their highest ever numbers at Isle of Muck, although a disappointing number of chicks fledged thereafter. Slievenacloy saw a record number of common lizards surveyed, and Devon carpet moth was recorded again at Glenarm, proving that the latter species has started colonising Northern Ireland. Beyond this, it was another year of hard work from our staff and volunteers with the reward of conserving and restoring our native wildlife – a fantastic effort by all involved.

Protected Sites

We continued to work in partnership with the Ministry of Defence to support the management of Ballykinler and Magilligan Special Areas of Conservation (SACs).

Our previous suspension of scrub cutting at Ballykinler ended with the removal of 10 hectares of thick gorse, which was obstructing the growth of crucial plants and covering the significant grey-dune grassland habitat. Furthermore, we resumed scrub cutting at Magilligan and successfully eliminated three hectares of dense blackthorn scrub. We also treated scrub that had been cut in the previous three years at both locations to prevent regrowth.

Surveys were completed for a number of priority species including petalwort, marsh fritillary butterfly, scarce crimson and gold moth, northern colletes bee and small eggar moth.



Scarce crimson & gold moth, Magilligan SAC © Adam Mantell

NRN partners at Clondeboy Estate



Nature Recovery Networks

We continued to work with project partners RSPB NI, National Trust and Woodland Trust to develop ways to adopt a landscape-scale approach to nature's recovery using Nature Recovery Networks (NRNs) – more, bigger, better and joined-up wildlife-rich places to benefit people and wildlife.

A second series of knowledge-sharing webinars took place focusing on work already underway in Northern Ireland and exploring our next steps. A suite of educational videos were also produced to provide greater understanding of the Nature Recovery Network approach. Finally, partners had the opportunity to visit stakeholders involved in the design and delivery of the Central Scotland Green Network, providing ample ideas and inspiration.



Engaging with farmers in Co Fermanagh © Giles Knight

Environmental Farming Scheme

Membership of our Environmental Farming Scheme (EFS) Group programme, funded by the Department of Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs (DAERA), continued to grow. This is one of five pilot schemes in Northern Ireland designed to support farmers to deliver nature conservation at scale through agri-environment schemes.

Our group facilitators worked with 441 farmers last year to engage them in positive land management; this included 24 group events, 268 one-to-one mentoring sessions and 152 farm walkovers.

We also added around 75 farms to the Higher Level Environmental Farming Scheme – which focuses on designated sites and priority habitats – putting approximately 4,000 hectares of high nature value land into positive management across four counties. In total, we have engaged with over 20% of all farmers with EFS (Higher) Agreements.

We engaged in a diverse range of activities, from identifying woodland and meadow plants and providing guidance on tree planting and hedge management to hosting peatland restoration demonstrations. We delved into sustainable farming concepts and provided valuable guidance on paperwork and record keeping. Additionally, we organised unique farm walks conducted after dark and addressed the impacts of ash dieback. We also collaborated with farmer groups in Co. Leitrim and worked closely with farmers and partner organisations to assist landowners in safeguarding priority species, including marsh fritillary, curlew, barn owls and red squirrels.

In addition, through on-the-ground surveys, facilitators and associates added 212 hectares of land to priority habitat maps, mainly species-rich grassland in Fermanagh, ensuring it can be protected and made eligible for agri-environment measures in the future.

Public Affairs, Policy and Legislation

It has been a critical year for policy and public affairs. World leaders finally signed the Montreal Biodiversity Framework at the UN Biodiversity Conference (COP15) in December 2022. This is the most significant global agreement yet to tackle biodiversity loss with over 23 targets agreed.

Although not binding, governments must show their progress in meeting the targets within their biodiversity plans. In Northern Ireland, we have been working with the Department of Agriculture, Environment, and Rural Affairs (DAERA) to co-develop a new Biodiversity Strategy and will be pressing for legally binding targets and strong reporting duties to be put into place. We also ran a communications campaign throughout COP15 to engage our supporter base and highlight the urgent need for local action.

The UK Government's proposed Retained EU Law Bill, which could see vital pieces of environmental legislation of EU origin scrapped, required a rapid response to ensure decades of wins for wildlife and wild places were not lost. We joined forces with fellow environmental charities to send a joint letter to NI Ministers as well as engaging with key local politicians to speak out against this Bill. We also worked with The Wildlife Trusts to mobilise public support in the form of template letters and a postcard campaign to MP constituency offices.

One of the biggest highlights of the year was in June when the long-awaited Northern Ireland Climate Change Act became law. As part of the NI Climate Coalition, we campaigned throughout the legislative process and provided oral and written evidence to the Assembly. This is the

first-ever legislation in Northern Ireland to drive forward action to tackle the climate and nature crises, although much work now needs to be done developing the first carbon budgets and sectoral plans.

We also responded to several other major consultations during the year, including the Draft Ammonia Strategy, Wild Birds Licenses, and the Republic of Ireland's fourth National Biodiversity Action Plan.

As a lead member of the Northern Ireland Marine Task Force, we worked with DAERA to help co-design vital new conservation strategies for Northern Ireland. These included the Blue Carbon Action Plan, to improve understanding of how coastal marine habitats can contribute to climate mitigation and adaptation strategies, the development of a Seabird Conservation Strategy, and an Elasmobranch Conservation Strategy to provide guidelines for the conservation of local sharks, skates and rays.

We also collaboratively responded to several key consultations affecting the marine environment. These included the Draft Joint Fisheries Statement, Management measures on the use of fast craft and personal watercraft in MPA's, Hand-gathering of intertidal shellfish in NI: a call for evidence, and the Future Strategy for the Marine and Fisheries Fund.

Barn owl success at Ballycruttie Farm

“Ballycruttie Farm has been involved with the RSPB’s Co. Down Farmland Initiative for a few years now, providing rich-seed habitats, rough grass margins, and hedgerows for a number of birds on the red list such as yellowhammers, linnets, tree sparrows, reed buntings and skylarks.

During conversations with RSPB, we talked about erecting barn owl boxes so they put us in touch with Ulster Wildlife. Ulster Wildlife advised us on the best locations and we set about putting our first box up in February 2021. Thankfully, having a husband who is a tree surgeon made this process a little easier.

On that same evening, we were excited to hear the eerie, long screech of a male barn owl, which continued for a few nights.

One particular evening, as I was chasing a duck to bed, I suddenly became startled by something flying low above my head – the night was silent, so the noise took me by surprise. The next evening, I went out a little earlier to see if my thoughts were correct – and they were; an owl flew out of the box and headed for the woodland.

Excited about our discovery, we invited Ulster Wildlife out and together we observed the barn owl box using infrared binoculars. Hissing sounds confirmed there was at least one chick.

Roll onto the middle of June, and a team arrived to ring what we assumed were two chicks. To our surprise, three chicks awaited us – two boys and a girl!

This was an amazing experience, both for my family and for all of those involved. They are the most beautiful, majestic birds, and we are so proud to have been part of their recovery story.”



Dawn Stocking
Ballycruttie Farm



Dawn Stocking with Ulster Wildlife and RSPBNI representatives



Barn owl chick being ringed

Outcome 2 People

More people are taking positive action for nature and climate and are benefitting from time spent in nature

Without more people taking action themselves, the fight to protect nature and tackle the climate crisis is an insurmountable task. We need to engage and empower people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities to take action and stand up for nature, and also to reconnect people with wild places and green spaces. By increasing the number of people who can speak up for nature, our collective voice will be louder and reach further than ever before.

95 registered volunteers

1,500 volunteer hours donated to nature

1,020 people learned about nature at our events

1,600 gardens signed up to our wildlife gardening campaign

28 Youth Forum members

Corporate volunteers at Ballynahone Bog Nature Reserve

Youth Forum residential at Crawfordsburn



Youth Forum

Our Youth Forum continued to grow with 12 new members joining during the year, providing a platform for young people to speak up for nature, take part in campaigns and take action for wildlife.

A highlight was a weekend residential at Crawfordsburn Country Park where members explored rocky shore ecology and made bird boxes, as well as discussing ways young people can influence change and have their say on the future of the Youth Forum. Other activities this year included 'Leave No Trace' training and contributing to a consultation on DAERA's Green Growth Strategy.

Young people repairing paths at Colin Glen Forest Park



Wild Youth

Young people from north and west Belfast engaged in nature-based wellbeing activities as part of this innovative programme, delivered in conjunction with Belfast Hills Partnership, and funded by the National Lottery Community Fund.

750 young people took part this year, and over 125 young people gained Bronze, Silver or Gold Wild Youth Award certificates in recognition of their time spent connecting with and helping the natural world. Feedback from participants has shown increases in their level of connection with nature as well as their mental wellbeing. A particular highlight of this programme has been the opportunity to work with young people who are new to Northern Ireland and who have arrived here recently seeking asylum.



Our Bright Future

Youth Forum members continued to promote three key policy issues on outdoor learning, green jobs, and the role of young people in decision-making, as part of our work supporting the UK Our Bright Future initiative.

As well as producing a Youth Manifesto for the Environment, forum members also met with local politicians to outline their environmental concerns and to advocate for specific actions in the run up to the Assembly elections in May 2022. Although the initiative ended in November 2022, the legacy of our involvement continues in other youth projects we are now delivering.



Tree talk with Bloomfield Wildlife Watch



Training workshop for youth workers in Belfast

Sustainable Youth Work Curriculum

Training workshops were delivered for youth workers from more than 20 organisations, focusing on the new Sustainable Youth Work curriculum we developed on behalf of the Education Authority.

The workshops gave youth workers the skills and confidence to engage young people with environmental issues. Resources are now available to youth workers across Northern Ireland via the Education Authority website.



Bloomfield group tree planting at Orangefield Park

Wildlife Watch Groups

Wildlife Watch Groups for children continued to grow with 30 members spanning three groups in Lisburn, Bloomfield and Bog Meadows, all run by passionate volunteers.

The groups meet monthly to enjoy activities such as pond dipping, bat walks, and listening to wildlife talks by guest speakers. During the year, the Bloomfield group launched a Tree Trail at Orangefield Park, in conjunction with Belfast City Council, raising the funds to purchase and plant 24 native trees, including signage for locals to enjoy.

Helping Glentoran with their raised beds



Nextdoor Nature

We embraced a new way of working with communities in south and east Belfast by discovering what they need and want in their area to help nature flourish and then supporting them with the skills and tools to take action on their own terms.

A number of community-led projects are now underway to help put nature into recovery, thanks to funding support from the National Lottery Heritage Fund. Glentoran Football Club is supporting local people to grow their own produce, raised beds have been revitalised at The Larder foodbank, wildlife gardening workshops have been delivered to alleyway gardeners in south Belfast, and residents of Wingrove Gardens plan to make their whole street wildlife-friendly. Most importantly, the local communities decide on what happens and drive the change in their own neighbourhoods.

Bog Meadows youth volunteer team



Community Engagement at Bog Meadows

Our work to strengthen a sense of community ownership of Bog Meadows Nature Reserve continued with a range of programmes to engage local residents and community groups, thanks to support from the National Lottery Community Fund.

This included nature connection sessions, wildlife walks, summer schemes, school education sessions, regular adult and youth volunteering opportunities and a Wildlife Watch group for children.

We are also delighted to have been awarded a grant from the Department for Infrastructure to create a 'Community Wildlife Garden'. This will be planned and cultivated in partnership with local community groups to showcase a working wildlife garden and provide a valuable community space for our activities.



'Let Nature In' Wildlife Gardening Campaign

We continued to promote our 'Let Nature In' campaign to encourage more people to make space for nature in their gardens.

Over 1,600 people have signed up to the campaign so far, with regular emails providing tips and advice throughout the year to help people welcome nature into their gardens.



Pine Marten, Co Down © Ronald Surgenor

Yellowhammer © Mark Hamblin 2020 VISION



Defend Nature Campaign

We teamed up with The Wildlife Trusts to mobilise public action to defend nature and put a stop to the UK Government's plans to threaten wildlife with the proposed Retained EU Law Bill.

Over 150 supporters used our template letter or postcard to ask their MPs to scrap the Bill, which could see vital pieces of environmental legislation of EU-origin weakened or removed.

We also joined forces with fellow environmental charities to send a joint letter to NI Ministers as well as engaging with key local politicians to speak out against this Bill.

Portballintrae Armada Interpretation project



Landfill Communities Fund

We helped distribute £276,000 of Landfill Communities Fund contributions from Fermanagh and Omagh District Council and Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council to 17 community and environmental projects.

The Landfill Communities Fund (LCF) is a grant scheme that enables operators of landfill sites to contribute a portion of the monies they pay as landfill tax directly to approved Environmental Bodies, such as Ulster Wildlife, for distribution to projects of environmental and public benefit.

2022 saw an increase in project activity with the effects of the pandemic winding down. For the remaining lifespan of contributions from our two landfill operators, we will continue to maximise the benefits of distributing funding to projects which are aligned with our own strategic goals of promoting health and wellbeing through enjoyment of the environment and rebuilding biodiversity.



Volunteers at Bog Meadows Nature Reserve

Red kite event for members



Exclusive Member Events

We delivered a successful series of online talks for members during the winter, many delivered by guest speakers, on everything from red kites and brent geese to wildlife photography.

We also planned an exclusive programme of member face-to-face events from woodland foraging to coastal walks for the spring and summer months.

Over 100 members joined us for our AGM and Members' Day at Malone House in September with special guest Craig Bennett, CEO of The Wildlife Trusts.

Danske Bank volunteers at Balloo Woodland Nature Reserve



Volunteering

We received tremendous support from 95 registered volunteers with practical conservation tasks on our nature reserves, species conservation efforts, people engagement and office support.

Over 200 corporate volunteers from 24 local businesses joined us at Balloo, Bog Meadows, Slievenacloy and Ballynahone Bog Nature Reserves to lend a hand with invasive species control, litter picks, hedge trimming, path clearing and site maintenance.

Our first native oyster nursery at Bangor Marina received fantastic interest from potential volunteers, with 15 dedicated volunteers now regularly helping us look after the oysters and conducting regular health checks.

Five volunteer student placements from Queen's and Ulster Universities joined our Nature Reserve and Marine teams for the year. They benefitted from a range of training and invaluable on-the-job experience learning about habitat management, invasive species control, GIS mapping, volunteer engagement, and survey data and reporting.



Youth Action For Nature

“ I got involved with Ulster Wildlife’s Youth Forum because I had a desire to connect with other young people with an interest in nature. Looking back, I was isolated in my love for nature and even a bit lost. The Youth Forum gave me a direction for my interest, and the virtual meet-ups allowed me to connect and learn from other young people. The Forum has been instrumental in giving me confidence and a sense of belonging within circles of ecology and environmental advocacy. I was even lucky enough to represent Ulster Wildlife at the Wildlife Trusts’ planning event for the upcoming youth festival.

The Forum is not just a connection-building group, but also a brilliant educational tool. One of my favourite memories was visiting Cuilcagh to learn about peatland restoration with young farmers – it was such a valuable experience, and each interaction with a different issue (like peatland restoration) leaves you a little more invested in it than you were before. In a similar way, meeting others in the Forum that have different interests or approaches can lead to the discovery of new interests – like butterflies!

I’m currently studying Biological Sciences at Queen’s and hope to pursue a career in ecology, or science communication. Not everyone in the Forum will – but I think that’s what makes it special. The Youth Forum supports those wishing to pursue an environmental job but also fosters and maintains an interest and care for nature in those who will not. In the face of the biodiversity and climate crises, we need everyone in all sectors to care – and through the Youth Forum, Ulster Wildlife is playing its part.



Eibhlinn Fee, aged 20
Ulster Youth Forum member

Outcome 3 Climate

Nature-based solutions are playing a critical role in addressing the impacts of climate change in Northern Ireland

We are in the midst of a nature and climate crises and neither can be resolved in isolation. The natural world can provide its own solutions to combat and reverse these threats. We are promoting the implementation of nature-based solutions such as the restoration of peatlands and of coastal blue carbon habitats to provide carbon sequestration and storage while supporting resilient wildlife.

50 hectares of peatland restored across 3 sites

34,500^{m3} of seawater filtered by our native oyster nursery



Peatland restoration in action

Restoring peatlands for nature and climate

We were a key delivery partner in the EU funded (Interreg VA) Collaborative Action for the Natura Network (CANN) project, in which we oversaw the restoration of hundreds of hectares of priority peatland habitats, from blanket bog on Cuilcagh Mountain to the species-rich fens in Lecale.

The CANN project ended in September 2022 with the completion of Conservation Action Plans for 11 Special Areas of Conservation (SAC). Since then, with funding from the DAERA Environment Fund, we have used these plans to deliver further restoration on key peatland habitats across Northern Ireland. This includes the installation of hundreds of new dams at Fairy Water Bogs and Tully Bog SAC in Co Tyrone. Additionally, we cleared invasive reed and scrub at Carrowcarlin Fen Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI) in Co Down using specialist amphibious machinery. We also continued efforts to control invasive rhododendron at Peatlands Park SAC, with over five hectares treated in areas that had never been addressed before.

Alongside this, we have been developing a 'pipeline' of potential restoration sites and collecting the data needed to deliver works on the ground when funding becomes available. We've collected LiDAR data (light detection and ranging), aerial imagery, and developed restoration plans for a variety of new sites including Teal Lough SAC and Magho Cliffs ASSI. We have also been working closely with other environmental organisations and making use of our new drone technology to collect data on areas such as the Mourne Mountains and Colebrooke Bogs.

Monitoring of atmospheric ammonia on sensitive sites has also been a key part of our work over the past year. We have continued to work with Northern Ireland Environment Agency to collect and analyse ammonia deposition on both Curran Bog and Turmennan Fen SAC. These efforts form part of wider monitoring taking place at a national level and will help strengthen policy and regulation around atmospheric ammonia going forward.

In February 2022, we purchased Haughey's Bog, a degraded peatland site in County Tyrone, with the aim of showcasing a range of peatland restoration techniques and developing a best practice site.

Restoring blue carbon habitats and species

We installed our second native oyster nursery at Glenarm Marina in March 2023 to help bring back this endangered species and provide a host of wider benefits to the marine environment.

The native oyster (*Ostrea edulis*) was once a common sight along the Glenarm coastline up until the mid-1800s when overfishing, disease, invasive species and pollution decimated the local population. To help revive the species, we have installed over 800 mature native oysters in 30 purpose-built cages suspended over the edges of the marina's pontoons, thanks to funding from DAERA and a generous donation from Wilson Resources.

The nursery will release millions of oyster larvae every summer, which will settle onto the seabed and support the oyster's natural recovery. These ocean superheroes will also help boost biodiversity by providing nursery grounds for fish and other creatures, improve water clarity and quality by filtering 162,000 litres of water every day, and tackle climate change by storing carbon in their shells.

At our first native oyster nursery in Bangor Marina, the oysters are thriving thanks to support from a fantastic group of volunteers who have helped us keep the cages clean, carry out health checks, and monitor the oysters' growth. Since April 2022, the average growth rate has been ~25mm with an average increase in weight of ~30g, similar to that observed in wild populations.

Over 60 marine species have also been recorded at the Bangor nursery since it was established, including common prawn, juvenile crab, pipefish, lumpsuckers, tompot blennies, spined stickleback fish and, on two occasions, the critically endangered European eel. This is a win for wildlife and as the oyster nursery grows and matures, we envisage a lot more species being discovered within these unique hanging mini reef systems.



Native oyster shell



Launch of Glenarm oyster nursery



Oyster cage at Bangor Marina



Helen Marks, Radio 4, with staff and volunteers at the Bangor oyster nursery

Bringing Back Native Oysters

“ I have always been interested in wildlife, whether it be on land or under the sea where I enjoyed diving down to wrecks and seeing the diversity of the wildlife down there.

Since I stopped diving, I had been looking for something to occupy my spare time. Then I heard about Ulster Wildlife's oyster nursery in Bangor Marina, so I went along to the volunteer induction day and was so inspired I had to get involved.

Although it is not very glamorous hoisting up and handling dirty oyster cages, I enjoy weighing and measuring the oysters to see their development and meeting new friends with like-minded interests.

It was fantastic to see a local radio station come down to the marina to talk to us and find out about the restoration project. I was particularly chuffed when they asked me to explain to the listeners what activity we were doing and why we choose to volunteer.

Over the last few months, I have learned a lot about how the oysters cluster together and make a sort of reef, which in turn provides a home and shelter for other marine life. I've learned how overfishing and pollution have drastically reduced their population in once large thriving beds, which in turn has affected the ecosystem, so it's crucial we redress the situation and start nurseries to re-introduce the native oyster back to the sea bed.



David Hill
Oyster Nursery Volunteer
at Bangor Marina

”



Thank you to our supporters

We would like to express our profound gratitude to all our valued members for their unwavering support throughout the year. Their dedication has been the cornerstone of our conservation efforts and has enabled us to make a significant impact for nature.

We are equally thankful for the generous gifts in wills received this year, as well as donations from businesses that have supported our work. In addition, funders and philanthropic loans have been key to developing long-term conservation projects and purchasing key areas of land for habitat restoration.

With this support, we have been able to implement vital conservation projects, restore habitats, protect endangered species, and create safe havens for wildlife to flourish. Thank you!

Tystie - our new boat for the Isle of Muck Nature Reserve



Members

Many charities are feeling the effects of the cost of living crisis on donations and regular giving. With fewer people giving to charity, our membership income dropped slightly this year. Our existing members continue to be an extremely important source of unrestricted funds and we were heartened to see the vast majority of members staying with us even in these difficult times, aided in part by an increase in member-exclusive events and benefits over the past year. Member generosity is the driving force behind our conservation efforts.

Our annual appeal raised more than £10,000 in match funding for the purchase of a new boat for seabird conservation at our Isle of Muck Nature Reserve. Our generous supporters chose to name the boat "Tystie" – the local/Scots name for black guillemot.

Swallow at Slieveadacy Nature Reserve © Ronald Surgenor



Legacy and In-Memory

Gifts in wills and in-memory donations, no matter the size, allow a person's passion for nature to live on. Every legacy or in-memory donation allows us to protect and buy more nature reserves, save more species, help support new nature champions, and ensure that future generations can experience nature.

Each year, more people are recognising the significant impact a gift in your will to Ulster Wildlife can make. This year, committed members and supporters left specific bequests to Ulster Wildlife and in-memory gifts were also received. Several people remembered loved ones via online donations.

Power NI volunteers at Slieveadacy Nature Reserve

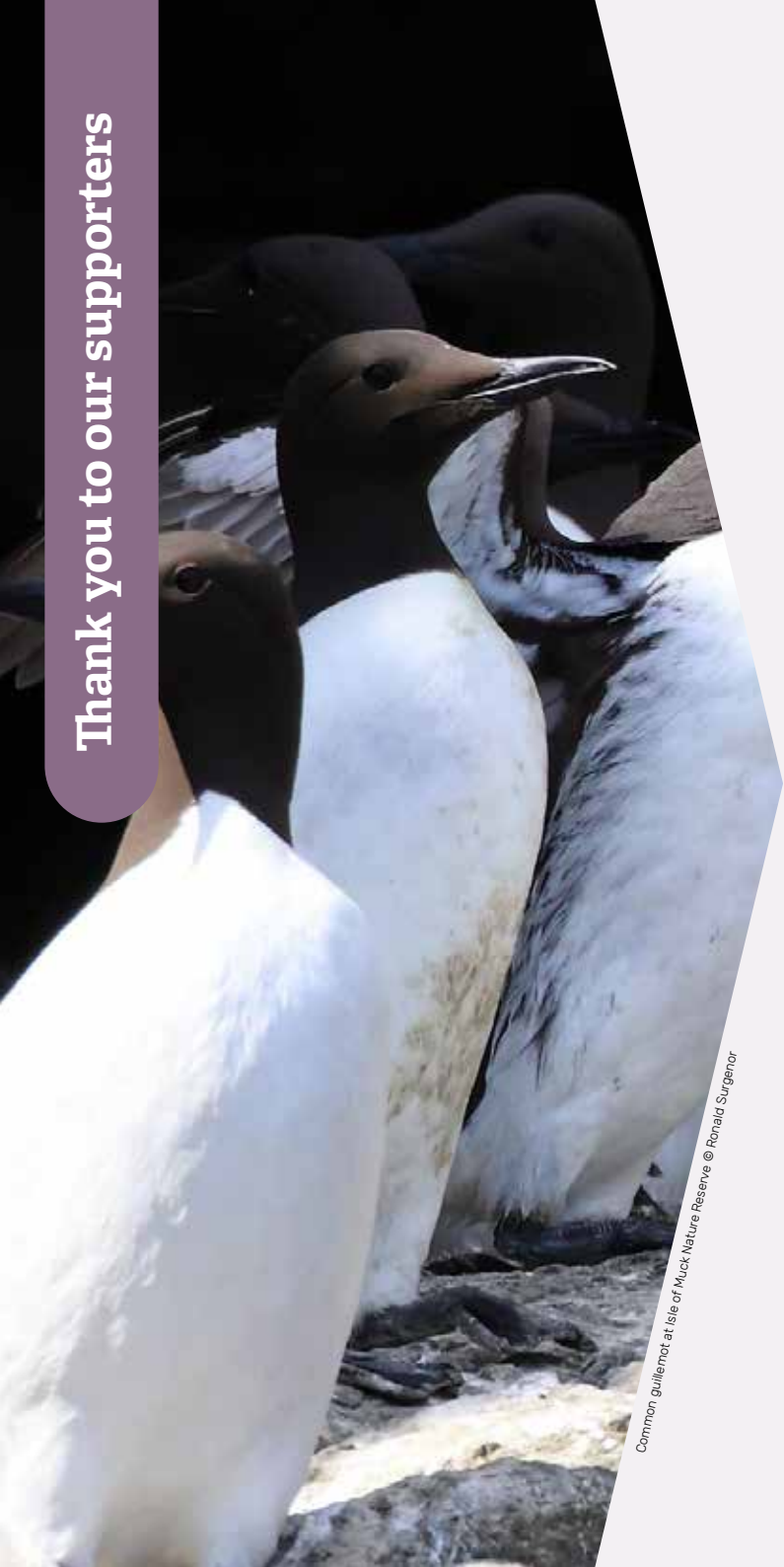


Businesses

We are proud to work with many local businesses to support nature's recovery. Working with others is crucial to tackling the nature and climate crises. Financial support from local businesses, in the form of unrestricted and in-kind donations or through the commissioning of our Ecological Consultancy services, is crucial to supplement our other funding streams. In addition, for these businesses, supporting Ulster Wildlife demonstrates their commitment to championing local nature conservation efforts to both their employees and customers.

Some of the businesses supporting local nature conservation efforts this year: Almac, Ardbarron Trust, The Boulevard Banbridge (Ulster Wildlife nominated as Charity of the Year), ENCIRC, Field Day Ireland, Finnebrogue, Mash Direct, Moy Park, NI Trucks, PowerNI, Spirit Aerosystems and Wilson Resources.

Thank you to our supporters



Common guillemot at Isle of Muck Nature Reserve © Ronald Surgenor

Six spot burnet moth at Slievenacloy Nature Reserve © Ronald Surgenor



Round-leaved sundew © Simon Gray



Funders

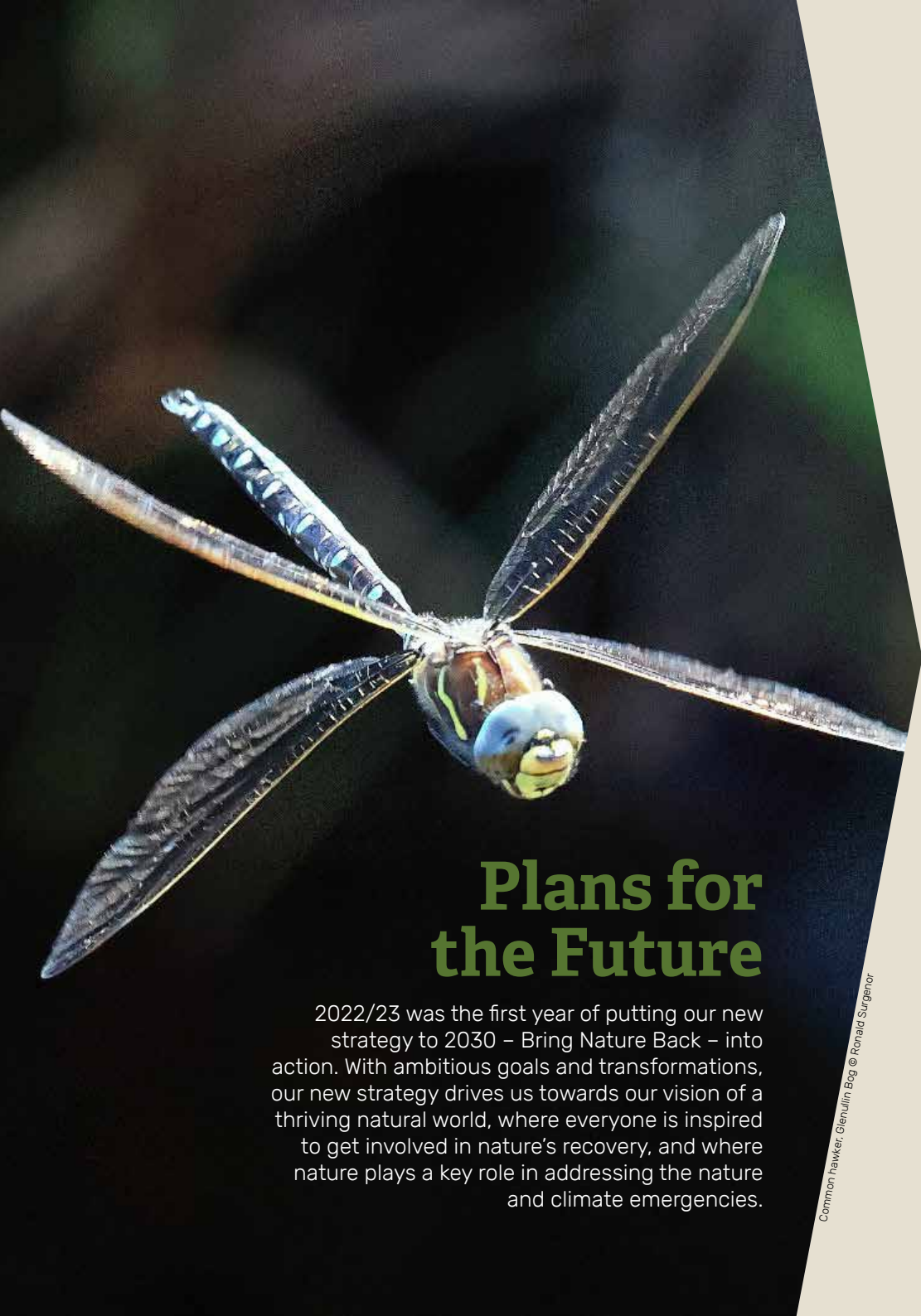
Charities rely on a wide range of funding streams including statutory (government) funding and charitable trust funding to help support some of our larger projects and areas of work. We are very grateful to our funding partners for providing funding for specific projects last year.

Thanks to our funding partners this year: Ards and North Down Borough Council, Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, Education Authority, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, Garfield Weston Foundation, INTERREG VA, Marine Institute, Ministry of Defense, National Lottery Community Fund, National Lottery Heritage Fund and Department of Communities.

Philanthropic Lenders

We believe that part of the solution to aid nature's recovery is to acquire and restore land. However, cash flow when land comes up for sale can often be a major barrier. Philanthropic lenders enable charities to respond quickly to land purchase and restoration opportunities when they arise, without the need to raise the funds first.

In February 2022, we were able to purchase a commercially cut-over peatland site in Co Tyrone with the aim of showcasing a range of peatland restoration techniques and developing a best practice site. A Philanthropic loan from John Smith, and gifts in Wills from supporters, helped secure this space for nature until funding from the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs was received.



Plans for the Future

2022/23 was the first year of putting our new strategy to 2030 – Bring Nature Back – into action. With ambitious goals and transformations, our new strategy drives us towards our vision of a thriving natural world, where everyone is inspired to get involved in nature's recovery, and where nature plays a key role in addressing the nature and climate emergencies.

Common Hawker, Glenullin Bog © Ronald Surgenor

Outcome 1: Nature is in recovery and wildlife is thriving across Northern Ireland.

Fundamental to achieving this outcome is the development and establishment of a national 'Nature Recovery Network' for Northern Ireland – a strategic approach to creating more, bigger, better and joined-up spaces for wildlife to thrive.

We will continue to explore opportunities for our nature reserves to deliver as part of a connected network within the wider landscape, while also delivering specific conservation actions for key species.

Our continued work engaging farmers and landowners is critical and we will work more closely with the fishing industry to ensure our seas are well-managed for nature.

Outcome 2: More people are taking positive action for nature and climate and are benefitting from time spent in nature.

Supporting and empowering people of all ages to become agents of change is critical to making the significant changes we need to address climate change and nature's decline.

We will continue to engage, empower and amplify the voice of people across Northern Ireland to speak up for and take action for nature through our campaigning work and community mobilising programmes.

We will also continue to engage younger generations in issues that will affect their future by growing our Youth Forum and by supporting youth-led nature activities. In addition, we will develop our Children and Young People Strategy to embed this new approach in our work going forward.

Maintaining and strengthening our membership and supporter network is key to delivering on the ambition of our strategy and a comprehensive growth plan and new staff structure will be put into place to expand our membership support base over the next five years.

Outcome 3: Nature-based solutions are playing a central role in addressing climate change.

Over the next number of years, we will work to tackle both the climate and biodiversity crises at a local level, recognising and promoting the importance of nature-based solutions. We will expand our work to restore peatlands, develop new native oyster nurseries, and establish new partnership projects to deliver blue carbon habitat restoration such as seagrass. Together, these initiatives will provide long-term carbon sequestration and storage while also promoting diverse and resilient wildlife.

Financial Review at 31 March 2023

Ulster Wildlife's financial position remained stable during the year and a modest surplus on unrestricted activities was achieved.

Sources of Income

Unrestricted income is revenue generated by the charity for its general purposes. It can be used at the discretion of the charity on any of the charity's objects and a substantial component is donations from our members and supporters.

Unrestricted income is 7% lower than the previous year (-£46k). Donations and legacies decreased (-£65k) as did consultancy income (-£14k). This was partly offset by an additional grant from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation of £35k to contribute towards the cost of living increases.

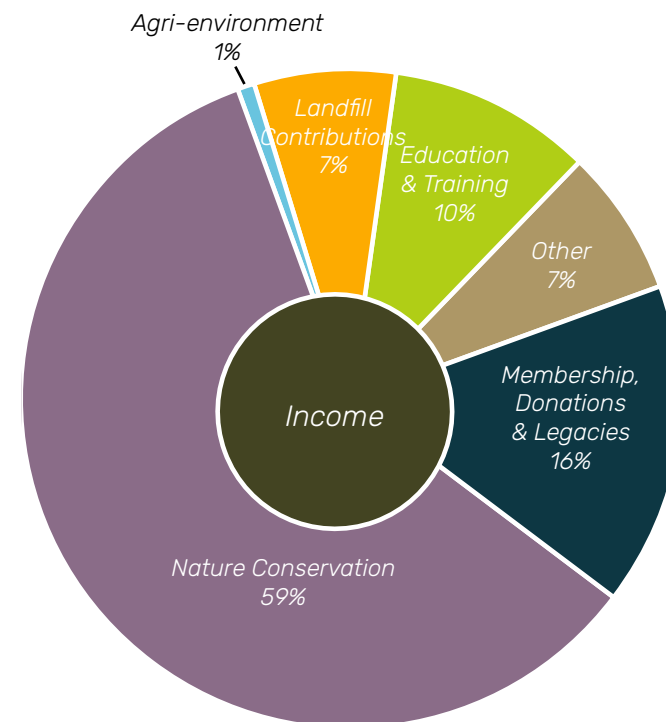
Restricted income is income given to the charity for specific purposes. It may be a grant for a specific piece of conservation work or education activity or funds to be awarded as grants to third parties, in line with specific grant guidelines.

Ulster Wildlife's restricted income has two main components, grants for specific conservation and education

activity which is delivered by the charity; and Landfill Communities Funds where grants are awarded by the charity to third parties for purposes defined under the Landfill Communities Fund guidelines.

Grants from third parties awarded to Ulster Wildlife for the direct delivery of specific conservation outcomes decreased by £260k in the year. In the previous year DAERA contributed £594k towards the purchase of additional lands at Slievenacloy which increased the 21/22 income substantially. DAERA continued to award Challenge Fund income however in 22/23 for conservation work on peatlands, our marine environment, priority species and nature reserves including the £75k towards the purchase of a peatland site at Haughey's Bog.

Other grants received in the year are outlined in Note 4 to the Financial Statements.



Income	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds £	Ratio
Membership, Donations & Legacies	453	72	525	16%
Nature Conservation	-	1,919	1,919	59%
Agri-environment payments	28	-	28	1%
Landfill Tax Contributions	-	227	227	7%
Environmental Education & Training	-	314	314	10%
Other Income	181	45	226	7%
Total Income	662	2,577	3,239	100%

Financial Review at 31 March 2023

How the Charity Spent its Resources

Overall expenditure was £273k lower in the year to 31 March 2023 than in the previous year.

In line with the income split, a large part of the expenditure is on conservation and education activity.

Restricted projects make a contribution to core overhead costs for time and expenses incurred in running the projects. After taking this contribution into account an unrestricted surplus of £23k was generated.

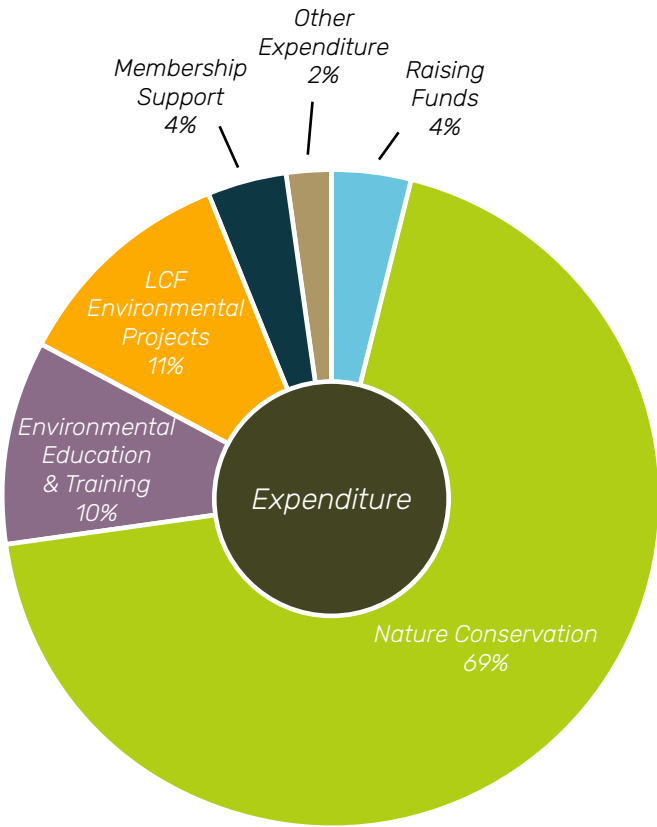
The surplus is in keeping with the charity’s objectives which are to deliver conservation outcomes rather than a surplus of income over expenditure. A modest surplus is, however, necessary in order to maintain financial stability and help to secure the long term viability of the charity.

After expenditure on restricted projects, the balance on restricted funds amounted to £500k.

This balance represents income received relating to projects in the year to 31 March 2023 where expenditure was incurred in prior years or will be incurred in future years and was in line with expectations. £184k relates to income received from DAERA for the purchase of peatland at Haughey’s Bog and capital equipment including where the expenditure has been capitalised on the balance sheet.

Restricted financial reserves cannot be utilised by the charity, except for the very specific purposes set out by the funder. These financial reserves are therefore not available to fund either general working capital requirements or any unexpected events.

Expenditure	Total Funds £	Ratio
Raising Funds	95	4%
Nature Conservation	1,870	69%
Environmental Education & Training	274	10%
LCF Environmental Projects	304	11%
Membership Support	125	4%
Other Expenditure	46	2%
Total Expenditure	2,714	100%



Structure, Governance and Management

Ulster Wildlife Trust, (operating as Ulster Wildlife) is registered with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland (NIC101848) and is a not-for-profit company incorporated in Northern Ireland, limited by guarantee (NI 12711). It is an independent body, locally governed, affiliated to The Wildlife Trusts, a federated network of 46 charities across the UK.

The charity is governed by a Board of Trustees (Council) comprised of up to 17 members who serve up to a nine-year term. The Ulster Wildlife Council is responsible for making strategic decisions in relation to policy and procedure within Ulster Wildlife, while day-to-day operational decisions and management is delegated to the Chief Executive, who in turn oversees the staff team of Ulster Wildlife of which there were 36 at the end of March 2023.

All Board Members receive induction training in relation to their role, are provided with a Governance Handbook when they are appointed and adhere to the Code of Good Governance. In addition, in 2022, the Board undertook governance training and carried out a governance review facilitated by Blue Moss consulting. The Board are currently implementing actions arising from this review.

Ulster Wildlife also has an Honorary President, Joe Furphy, who does not have a voting or decision-making role on the Board but contributes to discussions and carries out representation for the Charity.

Details of serving Trustees during 2022/23 can be found to the right.

CHAIRMAN  Ken Brundle (Appointed on 17 September 2013, appointed Chairman on 22 November 2017)	VICE-CHAIR  Stephen Aston Appointed on 07 December 2017, appointed Vice Chairman on 27 September 2018) F & A	VICE-CHAIR  David Sterling (Appointed 16 October 2020, appointed Vice Chair 02 December 2021) E, F & A	HONORARY TREASURER  David Hendron (Appointed on 25 July 2018, appointed Treasurer on 27 September 2018) F & A
COMPANY SECRETARY  Catherine Thompson (Appointed on 14 March 2019, appointed Company Secretary on 18 March 2021) G	COUNCIL MEMBER  Anna Barclay (Appointed 24 November 2020) E, G	COUNCIL MEMBER  Joe Breen (Appointed 9 June 2022) E	COUNCIL MEMBER  Bob Brown (Appointed 16 October 2020) E
COUNCIL MEMBER  Fiona Davey (Appointed on 19 November 2015) G	COUNCIL MEMBER  Stephen Maginn (Appointed 05 December 2019 Resigned 01 Oct 2022) F	COUNCIL MEMBER  Seamus McKee (Appointed 18 March 2021) F	COUNCIL MEMBER  Stephen Smith (Appointed 24 November 2020) F
COUNCIL MEMBER  Helen Surgenor (Appointed 24 November 2020) F	COUNCIL MEMBER  John Wittchell (Appointed on 07 December 2017,) E	COUNCIL MEMBER  Ed Wright (Appointed on 07 October 2015) F	HONORARY PRESIDENT  Joe Furphy



Red squirrel, Co Fermanagh © Adam Gerrard



Pine marten, Co Down © Ronald Surgenor



Green hairstreak butterfly, Slievenacloy Nature Reserve © Ronald Surgenor

Changes to the Ulster Wildlife Council during 2022/2023

Stephen Maginn resigned from Council on 01 October 2022. Joe Breen was confirmed at the AGM on 01 October 2022 after co-option on 09 June 2022.

The governance sub-structure comprises of four sub-committees: Governance, Finance & Audit, Environment and Fundraising. This governance framework is designed to ensure that we are an accountable, effective and efficient charity and to manage risk at the required level.

1. The Governance Committee (G) ensures that the Ulster Wildlife Council fulfils its legal, ethical and functional responsibilities through adequate governance policy development, skills audits, recruitment strategies for Council Members, training programmes, monitoring of Council activities and evaluation of Council's performance, human resources and health & safety management.

2. The Finance & Audit Committee (F&A) supports Council in ensuring that the effective governance of Ulster Wildlife is maintained in relation to: Financial and Physical Resources.

3. The Environment Committee (E) provides ongoing strategic input into the organisation's work linked to nature recovery and community action. The remit of this Committee encompasses nature reserves, environmental projects linked to habitats and/or species, and input into regional policy issues.

4. The Fundraising Committee (F) provides ongoing strategic input to the organisation's fundraising activities - with a focus on unrestricted fundraising.

Statement of Trustees' Responsibilities

The Trustees (who are also the Directors of Ulster Wildlife Trust) are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Annual Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and regulations.

Company and charity law requires the Directors to prepare financial statements for each financial year, which give a true and fair view of the state of the affairs of the charitable company and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the Directors are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently,
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities Statement of Recommended Practice,
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent,
- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements,
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charitable company will continue in operation.

The Trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the charity's transactions and disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and to enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Charities

Act 2008. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Provision of Information to Auditors

Each of the individuals who is a Trustee at the date of approval of this report confirms that:

- so far as they are aware, there is no relevant audit information of which the charity's auditor is unaware; and
- they have taken all the steps that they ought to have taken to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the charity's auditors are aware of that information.

Auditor

DNTCA Limited are deemed to be re-appointed under section 487(2) of the Companies Act 2006. This report was approved by the Board on 31 August 2023 and signed on its behalf by

Ken Brundle
Chairman

David Hendron
Honorary Treasurer



Articles of Association

Ulster Wildlife's charitable objectives as set out in our Articles of Association are:

(1) The advancement of environmental protection and improvement, in particular the conservation of all aspects of Northern Ireland and its adjacent areas' wildlife, biodiversity, geodiversity and associated natural beauty for the benefit of present and future generations by:

(a) safeguarding, maintaining and enhancing natural biodiversity and geodiversity through the management of nature reserves (however entitled or however established);

(b) practising, advocating, encouraging, influencing, advising and campaigning for best conservation practice involving land, sea and freshwater management practice in ways that favour biodiversity, geodiversity, ecosystem health, sustainable use of natural resources and sustainable development;

(c) undertaking action, independently or in partnership, to protect threatened habitats, sites of geodiversity or heritage significance, at local, national or international levels on or in water, land and adjacent seas;

(d) taking account of other aspects of the natural heritage on which wildlife is dependent or to which it contributes, including landforms and landscapes;

(e) improving the quality of life of people through supporting a biodiversity, ecosystem, geodiversity and sustainability led approach to the management and design of the natural and built environment.

(2) The advancement of education by raising the public's awareness and knowledge of all aspects of the natural and built heritage, biodiversity and geodiversity of Northern Ireland and its adjacent areas by promoting, undertaking and co-operating in research and gathering and sharing information on these topics.

(3) The advancement of citizenship through volunteering linked to natural heritage including the promotion of sustainable food production and sustainable lifestyles.

(4) The advancement of the arts, culture, heritage and science linked to natural heritage through events and project-based action.

(5) The advancement of health and well-being through activities linked to the natural environment.

Scarce crimson & gold moth © Adam Mantell

Key Policies & Processes

Managing Risk

Ulster Wildlife Trustees are responsible for overseeing risk management by the charity. They are responsible for ensuring that Ulster Wildlife has an effective system of internal control, management and audit to enable the charity to take advantage of opportunities whilst ensuring that the charity remains protected.

Risk management is well established and is considered in every aspect of our work. We have an active risk management process in place to make sure that appropriate risk assessments are completed and controls are in place to manage and mitigate risk across the organisation.

The Board of Trustees and Senior Management Team work together to ensure that risk is very carefully assessed in relation to the health, welfare, and security of staff, volunteers and the public. As such health & safety risk management is supported by an external consultant.

Risks are also reviewed in the broadest sense and anything that might alter or impact on the charity's ability to fulfil its charitable objectives is considered.

Processes include:

- Risk assessments are completed by all staff to identify, evaluate and manage risks.
- Health & Safety management system including phone app is used to facilitate management and record key information.
- Risk register with mitigation actions is reviewed at least quarterly by the Board.
- Health & Safety is a key factor in selecting external contractors and Health & Safety obligations are included in awarded external contracts.
- Comprehensive risk management reviews are carried out once a year by all subcommittees and are reported to the Board Meeting.
- Multi-year planning, with targets that are linked to delivery of organisational strategy.
- 'Value for Money' principles guide when and where we source goods and services.
- Annual external audit.

The most significant risks identified in 2022/23 were:

- The impacts of climate change on the environment, economy, and people.
- The cost of living crisis and its continued impact on fundraising and running costs for the organisation.
- Staff retention and recruitment.

The cost of living crisis has affected our ability to fundraise and our membership income did decrease slightly this year. A membership growth plan and associated staffing structure, similar to pre-covid levels, has been put into place in an effort to return to membership growth over the coming years. Similarly, the running costs for the charity increased significantly during the year.

Staff turnover was higher than usual during the year due to funding uncertainties and projects ending. This will remain a key issue for the charity to manage particularly with delays in agreement of government funding due to the lack of an Executive in Northern Ireland.

The most significant risks identified for 2023/24 are:

- The cost of living crisis and its continued impact on fundraising.
- Impact of inflationary pressures on running costs.
- Staff retention and recruitment.
- Delays in agreement of funding due to lack of NI Executive in place.

Bumblebee on devil's bit scabious, Slieve Donard Nature Reserve © Ronald Surgenor



Red squirrel © Mark Hamblin 2020 Vision

Our Promise to Our Supporters

At Ulster Wildlife our members, supporters and funders are at the heart of everything we do to help wildlife and wild places thrive in Northern Ireland. That is why, as a registered charity (NIC101848), we are part of the Fundraising Regulator's self-regulatory scheme.

As members of the scheme, we follow the Institute of Fundraising's Codes of Fundraising Practice and comply with the key principles embodied in the Codes. This means when supporters make a donation to us they can be assured that our fundraising is legal, open, honest and respectful.



Our Fundraising Promise

- We are committed to high standards.
- We do all we can to ensure that staff, fundraisers, volunteers and fundraising contractors working with us to raise funds comply with the Code and with this Promise.
- We comply with the law including those that apply to data protection, health and safety and the environment.
- We are honest and open. We tell the truth and do not exaggerate; we do what we say we are going to do.
- We answer all reasonable questions about our fundraising activities and costs.

We are clear

- We are clear about who we are, what we do and how donations are used.
- Where we have a promotional agreement with a commercial company, we make clear how much of the purchase price we receive.
- We give a clear explanation of how a donation can be made and how to amend a regular commitment.

We are respectful

- We respect the rights, dignities and privacy of our supporters and beneficiaries.
- We will not put undue pressure on anyone to make a gift, and if a person does not want to give or wishes to cease giving we will respect that decision.
- If someone tells us that they don't want us to contact them in a particular way we will not do so – our Privacy Notice for Members and Supporters is available on our website at ulsterwildlife.org/privacy-notice

We are accountable

- If anyone is unhappy with anything we have done whilst fundraising, they can contact us to make a complaint at complaints@ulsterwildlife.org. For further information, read our complaints policy.
- If we cannot resolve a complaint, we accept the authority of the Fundraising Regulator to make a final adjudication.

Equal Opportunities and Diversity

Ulster Wildlife aims to be an employer of choice, for people from different backgrounds, and through our Equality in the Workplace policy we promote respect for the individual and equality of opportunity.

Our aim is for our workforce to be truly representative of all sections of the wider community and for each employee to feel respected and able to give their best. Within Ulster Wildlife there is respect for promotion and protection of each individual's human rights. Ulster Wildlife promotes being at ease with all aspects of diversity, built on fairness and respect for all. Decisions about recruitment and selection, promotion, training or any other benefit are made objectively and without unlawful discrimination.

Our Equality in the Workplace policy helps all those who work for us to develop their full potential and ensure that the talents and resources of the workforce are utilised to fully maximise the efficiency of the organisation.

Sustainability

We have set a target to achieve net zero emissions by 2030 and we take sustainability very seriously. We have already commenced the net zero journey, which will be an integral part of our organisational and project planning. All electricity used is renewable and we are in the process of phasing in EVs as budget allows. During the project development phase for new projects, carbon footprint and location of project staff is considered to minimise carbon footprint as by the nature of our work, nature restoration is dispersed throughout Northern Ireland.

A priority for Northern Ireland in terms of the regional carbon budget is to restore damaged peatland and this is a significant delivery strand for the charity. During the year, we purchased a peatland site in Co Tyrone which has been cutover for commercial peat extraction and we are in the process of designing restoration plans for the site, which will be implemented during the next two to three years.

Wider network

Ulster Wildlife is part of a collective of 46 Wildlife Trusts, represented nationally by The Royal Society for Wildlife Trusts (RSWT). The Wildlife Trusts collectively act together, where appropriate, in key policy areas and campaigns.

Financial Management

Financial Reserves Policy

The Trustees recognise there is a balance to be achieved between delivering our charitable objectives and managing the actual and potential risks of failing to meet our liabilities when they fall due. Consequently, the Trustees plan to hold a level of unrestricted financial reserves to provide the necessary resilience to manage these risks.

These risks include, amongst others:

- Loss of funding sources
- Funding delays
- Costs associated with unforeseen closure

The Trustees, having assessed the likelihood of these risks occurring, consider that an unrestricted financial reserve level (excluding designated funds) equal to six months unrestricted payroll and support costs and potential winding up costs should be targeted. The balance on unrestricted reserves as at 31 March 2023, net of unrestricted fixed assets is £642k which meets our target.

Designated Funds

In addition to the above, the Trustees have designated certain unrestricted funds as the 'Fund for the Future'. This money is earmarked to help further the charity's strategic objectives, including the acquisition of nature reserves.

Monitoring and Reviewing

Financial reserve levels are monitored on a quarterly basis throughout the year as a standing item on the Finance Committee's agenda. They also form a part of the finance pack presented to the Board on a quarterly basis.



Razorbill at Isle of Muck Nature Reserve © Ronald Surgenor

Advisors, Senior Personnel and Administrative Details

Auditors	DNT Chartered Accountants Ormeau House 91-97 Ormeau Road Belfast BT7 1SH
Bankers	Danske Bank Belfast Finance Centre PO Box 183 Donegall Square West Belfast BT1 6JS
Company Secretary	Catherine Thompson
Senior Leadership Team	Jennifer Fulton - Chief Executive Officer Dawn Miskelly - Director of Development & Engagement Peter McEvoy - Director of Land Management Niamh Hart - Head of Finance
Charity Registration Number	NIC 101848
Company Registration Number	NI12711
Registered Office and Operational Address	McClelland House 10 Heron Road Belfast BT3 9LE

Independent Auditors' Report to the Members of the Ulster Wildlife Trust

Opinion

We have audited the charity financial statements of Ulster Wildlife Trust ('the charity') for the financial year ended 31 March 2023 which comprise the Statement of Financial Activities (incorporating an Income and Expenditure Account), the Balance Sheet, the Statement of Cash Flows and notes to the financial statements, including the summary of significant accounting policies set out in note 2. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including FRS 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland" and Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with FRS 102.

In our opinion when reporting in accordance with a fair presentation framework the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the charity's affairs as at 31 March 2023 and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice;
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the charity in accordance with ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled

our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the charity's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from the date when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the trustees with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

Other information

The other information comprises the information included in the annual report other than the financial statements and our Auditor's Report thereon. The trustees are responsible for the other information contained within the annual report. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

Our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the course of the audit, or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether this gives rise to a material

misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact. We have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinion on other matter prescribed by the Companies Act 2006

In our opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit:

- the information given in the Trustees Annual Report for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements; and
- the Trustees Annual Report has been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

In the light of the knowledge and understanding of the charity and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified material misstatements in the Trustees Annual Report.

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the Companies Act 2006 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept; or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- certain disclosures of trustees' remuneration specified by law are not made.



Independent Auditors' Report to the Members of the Ulster Wildlife Trust

Responsibilities of trustees for the financial statements

As explained more fully in the Statement of Trustees' Responsibilities, the trustees are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as they determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the trustees are responsible for assessing the charity's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless management either intends to liquidate the charity or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an Auditor's Report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We design procedures in line with our responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of irregularities, including fraud. The extent to which our procedures are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud is detailed below:

Our approach to identifying and assessing the risks of material

misstatement in respect of irregularities, including fraud and non compliance with laws and regulations, was as follows:

- The engagement partner ensured that the engagement team collectively had the appropriate competence, capabilities and skills to identify or recognise non-compliance with applicable laws and regulations;
- We identified the laws and regulations applicable to the company through discussions with directors and other management,
- We focused on specific laws and regulations which we considered may have a direct material effect on the financial statements or the operations of the company,

To address the risk of fraud through management bias and override of controls, we:

- Performed analytical procedures to identify any unusual or unexpected relationships;
- Investigated the rationale behind significant or unusual transactions.

In response to the risk of irregularities and non-compliance with laws and regulations, we designed procedures which included, but were not limited to:

- Agreeing financial statement disclosures to underlying supporting documentation;
- Reading the minutes of meetings of those charged with governance;
- Enquiring of management as to actual and potential litigation and claims;
- Reviewing correspondence with HMRC, Companies House and the company's legal advisors.

Greater butterfly orchid, Slieve Donard Nature Reserve © Ronald Surgenor



Independent Auditors' Report to the Members of the Ulster Wildlife Trust

Further information regarding the scope of our responsibilities as auditor

As part of an audit in accordance with ISAs (UK), we exercise professional judgement and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. We also:

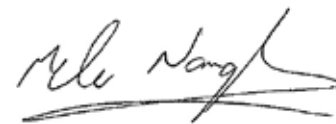
- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the charity's internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by trustees.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of the trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the charity's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our Auditor's Report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our Auditor's Report. However, future events or conditions may cause the charity to cease to continue as a going concern.

- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

The purpose of our audit work and to whom we owe our responsibilities

This report is made solely to the charity's members, as a body, in accordance with Chapter 3 of Part 16 of the Companies Act 2006. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charity's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charity and the charity's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.



Mr M Nangle (Senior Statutory Auditor) for and on behalf of **DNTCA Limited, Ormeau House, 91-97 Ormeau Road, Belfast, BT7 1SH.**

Six-spot burnet moth, Slieve Donard Nature Reserve © Ronald Surgenor

Statement of Financial Activities (including income and expenditure account) for the year ended 31 March 2023

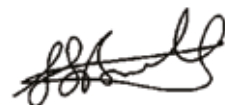
	Notes	Unrestricted Fund £	Restricted Fund £	2023 Total Funds £	2022 Total Funds £
INCOME FROM:					
Donations & Legacies	3	452,709	72,647	525,356	538,105
Conservation Activities	4	-	1,918,730	1,918,730	2,178,277
Agri-environment Payments		28,242	-	28,242	29,034
Charitable Activities - Landfill Contributions	5	-	227,085	227,085	337,392
Education & Training Activities	6	-	313,655	313,655	313,680
Interest Received	7	3,971	2,901	6,872	2,984
Other Income	8	176,818	41,880	218,698	247,950
TOTAL INCOME		661,740	2,576,898	3,238,638	3,647,422
EXPENDITURE ON					
Raising Funds	9	80,453	-	80,453	90,732
Charitable Activities	10	780,520	1,853,219	2,633,739	2,897,091
TOTAL EXPENDITURE		860,973	1,853,219	2,714,192	2,987,823
NET INCOME BEFORE TRANSFERS AND FOREIGN EXCHANGE					
		(199,233)	723,679	524,446	659,599
Gains/(losses) from Foreign Exchange		(871)	-	(871)	(5,237)
Transfers Between Funds	14	223,262	(223,262)	-	-
NET MOVEMENT IN FUNDS		23,158	500,417	523,575	654,362
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS:					
Total Funds at 1 April 2022		1,178,771	1,485,935	2,664,706	2,010,344
Transfer (from)/to Designated Fund for the Future		(3,192)	3,192	-	-
TOTAL FUNDS AT 31 MARCH 2023		1,198,737	1,989,544	3,188,281	2,664,706

The notes on pages 40 to 43 form part of these financial statements.
The Statement of financial activities includes all gains and losses in the year.
All income and expenditure derives from continuing activities.

Statement of Financial Position at 31 March 2023

	Notes	Unrestricted Fund £	Restricted Fund £	2023 Total Funds £	2022 Total Funds £
FIXED ASSETS					
Tangible Assets	16	325,038	1,501,703	1,826,741	1,670,011
CURRENT ASSETS					
Debtors	17	104,934	121,872	226,806	717,915
Cash at Bank and in Hand		928,421	1,148,467	2,076,888	1,703,260
		1,033,355	1,270,339	2,303,694	2,421,175
CURRENT LIABILITIES					
Creditors	18	151,549	439,682	591,231	1,074,551
NET CURRENT ASSETS		881,806	830,657	1,712,463	1,346,624
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES		1,206,844	2,332,360	3,539,204	3,016,635
CREDITORS due in more than 1 year					
Capital Grants	19	8,107	342,816	350,923	351,929
		1,198,737	1,989,544	3,188,281	2,664,706
FINANCIAL RESERVES					
General Fund	20	989,251	-	989,251	988,414
Fund for the Future	22	209,486	-	209,486	190,357
Restricted Funds	21	-	1,989,544	1,989,544	1,485,935
		1,198,737	1,989,544	3,188,281	2,664,706

These financial statements were approved and signed by the members of the board and authorised for issue on 31st August 2023



Ken Brundle, Chairman



David Hendron, Honorary Treasurer

The notes on pages 40 to 43 form part of these financial statements.
Company Registration Number: NI 12711

Statement of Cash Flows for year ending 31 March 2023

	2023	2022
	£	£
Cash Flows from operating activities		
Net Income/(Expenditure)	524,446	659,599
<i>Adjustments for</i>		
Depreciation of Tangible Fixed Assets	25,982	7,995
Increase/(Decrease) in Deferred Capital Grant	(1,006)	(1,006)
(Increase)/Decrease in Trade and Other Debtors	491,109	(383,485)
Increase/(Decrease) in Trade and Other Creditors	(483,320)	837,627
Net Cash (used in)/from Operating Activities	557,211	1,120,730
Cash Flows from Investing Activities		
Purchase of Tangible Assets	(187,508)	(801,065)
Disposal of Tangible Assets	4,796	20,961
Net Cash used in Investing Activities	(182,712)	(780,104)
 Net Increase /(Decrease) in Cash and Cash Equivalents	374,499	340,626
Cash and Cash Equivalents at Beginning of the Year	1,703,260	1,367,871
Net Increase/(Decrease) in Cash and Cash Equivalents due to Exchange Rate Movements	(871)	(5,237)
Cash and Cash Equivalents at End of the Year	2,076,888	1,703,260

Notes to the accounts

1 Statement of Compliance

These financial statements have been prepared in compliance with FRS102, 'The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and the Republic of Ireland', 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 (Charities SORP (FRS102)) and the Charities Act 2008.

2 Accounting Policies

Basis of preparation

The financial statements have been prepared on the historical cost basis, as modified by the revaluation of certain financial assets and liabilities measured at fair value through income or expenditure.

The financial statements are prepared in sterling, which is the functional currency of the entity.

Going concern

There are no material uncertainties about the charity's ability to continue.

Fund accounting

Unrestricted funds are available for use, at the discretion of the trustees, to further any of the charity's purposes.

Restricted funds are subject to restrictions on their expenditure declared by the donor or funder or through the terms of an appeal.

Incoming resources

All incoming resources are included in the statement of financial activities when entitlement has passed to the charity; it is probable that the economic benefits associated with the transaction will flow to the charity and the amount can be reliably measured. The following specific policies are applied to particular categories of income:

- income from donations or grants is recognised when there is evidence of entitlement to the gift, receipt is probable and its amount can be measured reliably.
- legacy income is recognised when receipt is probable and entitlement is established.
- income from contracts for the supply of services is recognised with the delivery of the contracted service.

These are classified as unrestricted funds unless there is a contractual requirement for it to be spent on a particular purpose and returned if unspent, in which case it is regarded as restricted.

Resources expended

Expenditure is recognised on an accruals basis as a liability is incurred. Expenditure is classified under headings of the statement of financial activities to which it relates:

- expenditure on raising funds includes the costs of all fundraising activities.

- expenditure on charitable activities includes all costs incurred by the charity in undertaking activities that further its charitable aims for the benefit of its beneficiaries, including those support costs and costs relating to the governance of the charity.

All costs are allocated to expenditure categories reflecting the use of the resource. Direct costs attributable to a single activity are allocated directly to that activity. Shared costs are apportioned between the activities they contribute to on a reasonable, justifiable and consistent basis.

Depreciation

Purchased assets, which individually exceed £1000 at cost are included in the balance sheet at historic cost less depreciation and any impairment in accordance with FRS 102.

Fixed Assets are depreciated over the period of their useful lives as follows:

Land	not depreciated
Buildings	2.5% straight-line
Equipment	10% straight line
Computers	25% straight line
Vehicles - cars and vans	15% straight line

Depreciation for specialist conservation equipment with limited resale value would normally be depreciated over the lifetime of the project in which they are used.

Grants

Government and other grants are recognised at the fair value of the asset received or receivable. Grants are not recognised until there is reasonable assurance that the charity will comply with the conditions attaching to them and the grants will be received.

Foreign currency

Transactions in foreign currencies are translated at rates prevailing at the date of the transaction.

Pensions

Ulster Wildlife operates a defined contribution pension scheme and matches employee contributions to the scheme at a maximum rate of 7% of salary.

Taxation

The organisation is a registered charity with HMRC and is therefore not liable for taxation to the extent that any surplus or gains arising are wholly applied to its charitable objects.

The company is registered for VAT. Much of the income is either exempt or outside the scope of VAT.

Consequently, it is not possible to recover most of the VAT incurred on expenditure. Income and expenditure are shown exclusive of recoverable VAT.

Notes to the accounts

3 Donations & Legacies

	Unrestricted Funds 2023 £	Restricted Funds 2023 £	Unrestricted Funds 2022 £	Restricted Funds 2022 £
Legacy & In Memory Giving	3,320	-	61,166	-
Membership Contributions inc. Gift Aid	416,757	-	420,319	-
Corporate Support	26,491	58,500	7,500	10,000
Other Gifts & Donations	6,141	14,147	28,919	10,201
	452,709	72,647	517,904	20,201

4 Conservation Grants

	Unrestricted Funds 2023 £	Restricted Funds 2023 £	Unrestricted Funds 2022 £	Restricted Funds 2022 £
DAERA Environment Fund	-	1,092,606	-	1,257,842
DAERA Maritime and Fisheries Fund	-	47,625	-	-
Department for Infrastructure Living Places and Spaces Fund	-	10,000	-	-
Environmental Farming Scheme	-	231,641	-	195,673
Esmée Fairbairn Foundation	-	103,250	-	150,000
EU- Interreg VA	-	247,531	-	410,941
Garfield Weston Foundation	-	30,000	-	30,000
Kreitman Foundation	-	11,600	-	15,000
Landfill Communities Fund	-	2,167	-	4,419
Marine Institute	-	1,623	-	1,617
Ministry of Defence	-	14,249	-	17,684
National Lottery Heritage Fund	-	116,438	-	92,307
Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts	-	10,000	-	-
Save Our Seas Foundation	-	-	-	2,794
	-	1,918,730	-	2,178,277

5 Landfill Environmental Projects

	Unrestricted Funds 2023 £	Restricted Funds 2023 £	Unrestricted Funds 2022 £	Restricted Funds 2022 £
Landfill Contributions Received	-	227,085	-	337,392
	-	227,085	-	337,392
Expenditure				
Entrust Administration Fee	-	8,084	-	9,818
Direct Project Expenditure	-	276,178	-	238,944
Direct Costs	20,166	-	30,490	-
	20,166	284,262	30,490	248,762

Notes to the accounts

6 Education & Training Grants

	Unrestricted Funds 2023 £	Restricted Funds 2023 £	Unrestricted Funds 2022 £	Restricted Funds 2022 £
DAERA Environment Fund	-	-	-	35,744
Department for Communities (JobStart Scheme)	-	60,471	-	12,012
Department for Communities (Covid Recovery Employment and Skills Initiative for Heritage)	-	44,249	-	-
Education Authority	-	7,445	-	31,332
European Solidarity Corps	-	13,201	-	-
National Lottery Community Fund (Our Environment, Our Future)	-	22,768	-	74,124
National Lottery Community Fund (People & Communities)	-	74,761	-	60,263
National Lottery Community Fund (Empowering Young People 3)	-	61,282	-	31,226
National Lottery Heritage Fund	-	29,478	-	58,829
Other	-	-	150	10,000
	-	313,655	150	313,530

7 Interest Received

Interest received in Restricted Funds is the interest earned on landfill tax receipts held prior to disbursement, and interest received which is used to fund expenditure on nature reserves. Interest received in unrestricted funds is bank interest earned on other cash balances.

8 Other Income

	Unrestricted Funds 2023 £	Restricted Funds 2023 £	Unrestricted Funds 2022 £	Restricted Funds 2022 £
Esmée Fairbairn Foundation Core Funding	110,000	-	75,000	-
Consultancy	20,198	-	34,495	63,891
Furlough Income	-	-	7,312	-
Sundry income	46,620	41,880	42,281	24,971
	176,818	41,880	159,088	88,862

9 Expenditure on Raising Donations & Legacies

	Unrestricted Funds 2023 £	Restricted Funds 2023 £	Unrestricted Funds 2022 £	Restricted Funds 2022 £
Travel	62	-	-	-
Professional Fees	92	-	-	-
Printed Materials, Misc	14,338	-	10,369	-
Wages & Salary Costs	65,961	-	80,363	-
	80,453	-	90,732	-

Notes to the accounts

10 Charitable Activities

	Unrestricted Funds 2023 £	Restricted Funds 2023 £	Total Funds 2023 £	Total Funds 2022 £
Landfill Environmental Projects	20,167	284,262	304,429	279,252
Nature Conservation	227,489	1,355,435	1,582,924	1,912,891
Environmental Education & Training	73,714	158,128	231,842	285,336
Membership Support Costs	106,115	-	106,115	75,251
Organisation Support Costs	325,698	43,965	369,663	307,847
Depreciation	17,503	12,270	29,773	24,791
Bank Interest & Charges	5,109	-	5,109	4,784
Auditors Remuneration	4,725	-	4,725	3,780
(Profit)/Loss on Disposal of Fixed Asset	-	(841)	(841)	3,159
	780,520	1,853,219	2,633,739	2,897,091

11 Expenditure on Charitable Activities

	Staff Costs £	Other direct costs £	2023 £	2022 £
Landfill Environmental Projects	16,130	288,298	304,428	279,252
Nature Conservation	678,958	903,966	1,582,924	1,912,891
Environmental Education	203,329	28,514	231,843	285,336
Membership Support Costs	46,042	60,073	106,115	75,251
Organisation Support Costs	192,359	177,304	369,663	307,847
Other- Depreciation, Bank Charges, Audit.	-	38,766	38,766	36,514
	1,136,818	1,496,921	2,633,739	2,897,091

Other Direct costs Environmental Projects	Landfill Environmental Projects	Nature Conservation Projects	Environmental Education Projects	Membership & Organisation Support Costs	Total
£	£	£	£	£	£
Direct Project Costs	284,262	114,056	15,490	15,373	429,181
Premises Costs	4,036	24,433	1,280	115,701	145,450
Postage, Printing & Stationery	-	3,869	522	41,385	45,776
Staff Travel and Vehicle Costs	-	63,060	2,146	15,125	80,331
Contracted Services	-	666,125	2,440	15,713	684,278
Staff Training	-	16,847	4,210	2,316	23,373
Council Costs	-	-	-	4,281	4,281
Information Technology	-	15,576	2,426	27,483	45,485
	288,298	903,966	28,514	237,377	1,458,155

Notes to the accounts

12 Depreciation

	Unrestricted Funds 2023 £	Restricted Funds 2023 £	Unrestricted Funds 2022 £	Restricted Funds 2022 £
Motor Vehicles	3,499	12,270	3,499	6,499
Equipment	5,759	-	6,548	-
Buildings	8,245	-	8,245	-
	17,503	12,270	18,292	6,499

13 Staff Costs

	2023 £	2022 £
Salaries and Wages	1,044,198	1,033,452
Social Security Costs	93,964	91,548
Pension Contributions	64,617	73,321
	1,202,779	1,198,321

One employee received emoluments of more than £60,000. The average number of employees during the year, calculated on the basis of full time equivalents, was 33.6. (2022- 36.5).

The key management personnel comprise the trustees and the members of the senior management team.

The total employee benefits of the key management personnel was £287,960. (2022: £271,838).

14 Transfer Between Funds

	2023 £	2022 £
Landfill Fund Administration Costs	20,166	30,490
Project Contribution to Organisation Support Costs	213,101	160,530
Conservation Work at Glendun	-	2,107
Match Funding for DAERA Funding	(10,005)	(20,733)
	223,262	172,394

15 Board Remuneration and Related Party Transactions

Helen Surgenor was appointed to the Board in the year to 31 March 2022. She is the spouse of a current staff member.

No members of the Board received any remuneration during the year in their capacity as Trustees.

No travel and subsistence costs were paid on behalf of trustees during the year. (2022 £NIL).

No travel and subsistence costs were paid to trustees during the year. (2022 £NIL).

No trustees received payment for professional services supplied to the charity (2022 £NIL).

No balances are owed to trustees at 31st March 2023.

Notes to the accounts

16 Fixed Assets

	Nature Reserves £	Land & Buildings £	Motor Vehicles £	Equipment & Computers £	TOTAL £
COST OR VALUATION					
At 1 April 2022	1,161,966	589,355	149,464	76,674	1,977,459
Additions	78,192	-	22,399	86,917	187,508
Disposals	-	-	-	(4,796)	(4,796)
At 31 March 2023	1,240,158	589,355	171,863	158,795	2,160,171
DEPRECIATION					
At 1 April 2022	-	165,285	83,613	58,550	307,448
Charge for year	-	8,245	16,774	5,759	30,778
Disposals	-	-	-	(4,796)	(4,796)
At 31 March 2023	-	173,530	100,387	59,513	333,430
NBV at 31 March 2023	1,240,158	415,825	71,476	99,282	1,826,741
including restricted assets of	1,200,158	150,000	64,628	86,917	1,501,703

Glendun farm has been included at probate value of £150,000.

17 Debtors

	Unrestricted Funds 2023 £	Restricted Funds 2023 £	Unrestricted Funds 2022 £	Restricted Funds 2022 £
Debtors and Prepayments	85,958	73,530	68,901	10,349
Grants	-	48,342	118,405	499,575
Tax Refunds Due	18,976	-	20,685	-
	104,934	121,872	207,991	509,924

18 Creditors Falling Due Within One Year

	Unrestricted Funds 2023 £	Restricted Funds 2023 £	Unrestricted Funds 2022 £	Restricted Funds 2022 £
Sundry Creditors and Accrued Expenditure	151,549	439,682	77,373	997,178

A specific provision has been created in the year of £60k for roof repairs identified as necessary at McClelland House.

19 Creditors Falling Due After More Than One Year

	Unrestricted Funds 2023 £	Restricted Funds 2023 £	Unrestricted Funds 2022 £	Restricted Funds 2022 £
Capital Grants	8,107	342,816	9,113	342,816

Notes to the accounts

20 Movement on Unrestricted Funds

	Unrestricted Funds 2023 £	Unrestricted Funds 2022 £
Opening Balance	988,414	942,333
Surplus for the Year	23,158	127,247
Transfer to Fund for the Future	(22,321)	(81,166)
Closing Balance	989,251	988,414

21 Movement on Restricted Funds

	Restricted Funds 2023 £	Restricted Funds 2022 £
Opening Balance	1,485,935	790,226
Net Income/(Expenditure) for the year	500,417	527,115
Transfer from/(to) Fund for the Future	3,192	168,594
Closing Balance	1,989,544	1,485,935

Some funders pay in advance and other funders issue payment only after the expenditure has been incurred. The movement on restricted funds in any year is a result of timing differences between receipts of grants for restricted projects and the related expenditure.

22 Movement on Fund for the Future

	Designated Fund for the Future 2023 £	Designated Fund for the Future 2022 £
Opening Balance	190,357	277,785
Income from Donations and Legacies	22,321	81,166
UW Contribution to the Purchase of Land	(3,192)	(168,594)
Closing Balance	209,486	190,357

Fund for the Future includes monies from gifts in wills and legacy donations and other donations, including restricted donations. It will be used to purchase and manage nature reserves, protect key species as well as educate and support future wildlife champions.

23 Contingent Liability

A portion of grants received may become repayable if the charity fails to comply with the terms of the relevant letters of offer.

24 Taxation

As a charity, Ulster Wildlife Trust is exempt from tax on income and gains to the extent that these are applied to its charitable objects. Ulster Wildlife is registered for VAT in relation to some specific taxable supplies. The net amount payable on taxable supplies was £13,496 in the period (2022 £13,750).

25 Company Status

Ulster Wildlife Trust Limited is a private company limited by guarantee and consequently does not have share capital. Each of the members is liable to contribute an amount not exceeding £1 towards the assets of the company in the event of liquidation.



School children at the launch of Glenam native oyster nursery



Ulster Wildlife is Northern Ireland's largest local nature conservation charity. We are working to bring nature back across Northern Ireland and secure a wilder future where people and nature are thriving together.

Join us now and together we can make a real difference
www.ulsterwildlife.org/join-us

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We are proud to be one of **46 independent Wildlife Trusts** working across the UK



Ulster Wildlife Trust, (operating as Ulster Wildlife) is registered with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland NIC101848 and is a not-for-profit company incorporated in Northern Ireland, limited by guarantee NI 12711.