



Gloucestershire
Wildlife Trust



Impact Report

2023/2024

gloucestershirowildlifetrust.co.uk

Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust Registered Charity Number 232580

Welcome to Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust's Impact Report for 2023/24



Over the past year, the Trust has been through a period of change and growth. We said farewell to our CEO Roger Mortlock in April 2023, and welcomed our new

CEO, Andrew McLaughlin, in September. During this transition, members of our Executive Board stepped up to lead the Trust, and staff across the organisation continued to put Gloucestershire's wildlife at the heart of everything we do. Since starting, Andrew has hit the ground running by refreshing our 2030 strategy, prioritising building relationships with our key partners, as well as meeting with prospective parliamentary candidates ahead of the general election back in July.

To achieve our goals for nature in Gloucestershire, we need to bring as many people as possible on the journey with us, from politicians to the toddlers that come along to our Nature Tots sessions (and everyone in between). Our Do One Thing project is helping people across the county take their first action for nature, whilst our innovative Gloucester and Cheltenham Waterscapes project, which launched last year, is showcasing Natural Flood Management solutions in urban areas, showing people what they can do at home to tackle the climate crisis. The work of our Wilder Learning team with children and young people is also going from strength to strength, with more children than ever getting the chance to experience the wonder of nature for the first time.

Work to halt and reverse wildlife declines often involves improving the outlook for a particular species, whilst simultaneously providing benefits for others. Two new examples that illustrate this approach are the River Frome Native Crayfish Recovery and Recovering Adders on the Cotswold Escarpment projects, both of which kicked off in September. In further exciting species developments, our beaver reintroduction

feasibility study is now well under way thanks to the generous donors who supported our Project Beaver appeal back in May 2023.


In addition to our work with people and species, the Facilities Team has been working to ensure we become as sustainable as possible in the way we work. In addition to existing energy saving measures we now have an array of solar panels on the roof of our office at Robinswood Hill, helping to ensure we are fit for the future.

The goals of our 2030 strategy are ambitious, and we will only achieve them if we scale up the work we're doing. This report presents an update on our progress so far. Increasingly you will read that many of our projects now involve several partners, cover very large areas of the county or several counties, and include funding from a diverse range of sources.

We could not do what we do without our members, volunteers, and supporters, much as an oak tree could not flourish without its roots and the ground beneath it, so thank you to everyone who has supported us this year, and in years gone by. With change comes growth, and across the organisation we have been working to deliver our refreshed strategy, to halt and reverse nature declines, creating bigger, better, and more connected wild places.

As we move forward, we hope that with your generous support, we can continue to make a difference for wildlife in Gloucestershire, achieving our ambitious 2030 strategy and delivering nature's recovery here, alongside the people of this wonderful county.

Dr David Bullock, Chair of Trustees



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A year in review



2023

April

1 Farewell to Roger Mortlock

May

Interviews for our new CEO take place

June

30 Days Wild
2 Four years of funding secured for Do One Thing
3 New steps at Crickley Hill to improve accessibility

July

5 Successful Project Beaver appeal

August

HillFest at RWH
6 Prize-giving for the Photo Competition

September

Wild About Gardens Survey
7 New Chief Executive Andrew McLaughlin joins

October

8 Cotswold Canals Connected scrape creation
9 Alok Sharma Q&A event
10 Purple heron at Whelford Pools

November

11 Fiona Reynolds becomes President

December

12 Collaboration with the Heritage Hub in Gloucester, sharing records from our archives

2024

January

13 10th anniversary of Toads on Roads
New parking system at Crickley Hill

February

14 Expansion of our Wilder Learning Team
15 Habitat works at Box Wood nature reserve to link through to Stuart Fawkes nature reserve
16 Strategic and Local Plan campaign begins
Rain garden built at Gloucester Royal Hospital

March

Launch of our new Volunteer Handbook
17 Relaunch of the People's Nature Reserve
18 GWT host The Wildlife Trust for a federation event
19 Butterfly appeal launch



Completion of the Barton Street Nature Highway

4 Eels in the classroom on ITV



PHOTOS © GWT, BILLY HEANEY, NICK UPTON, AN FLETCHER, NATHAN MILLAR, ABI PAINE, DAVID SLATER

How we're doing against our plans

Beaver reintroduction feasibility study



PHOTO © NICK UPTON

In partnership with Forestry England and with the support of the National Lottery Heritage Fund, our beaver reintroduction feasibility study officially began in November. In the first six months of the project, we have completed an initial assessment of beaver habitat suitability and identified areas of potential impact in every watercourse in the county. These findings suggest that Gloucestershire's watercourses could provide over 1000km of habitat suitable for beavers.

We have created a new beaver feasibility field survey method, to validate and expand these initial findings, and have begun an ecological assessment to determine how the presence of beavers could impact other species in the local area. To share our findings and add to growing reintroduction research, we have engaged widely with experts and other Wildlife Trusts and are exploring the use of new modelling tools to gather further data on flood risk and beaver dispersal patterns.

To create a robust engagement strategy, we are carrying out a stakeholder analysis, and later this year we will lead the formation of a county-wide stakeholder partnership to lay the foundations for future human-beaver coexistence. By this time next year, we'll have published a full feasibility report, including a shortlist of potential release sites, along with recommendations for further work to secure a successful future for this incredible keystone species in Gloucestershire.

PHOTO © DAVID PARKYN

Creating bigger, better, more connected landscapes



PHOTO © NICK UPTON

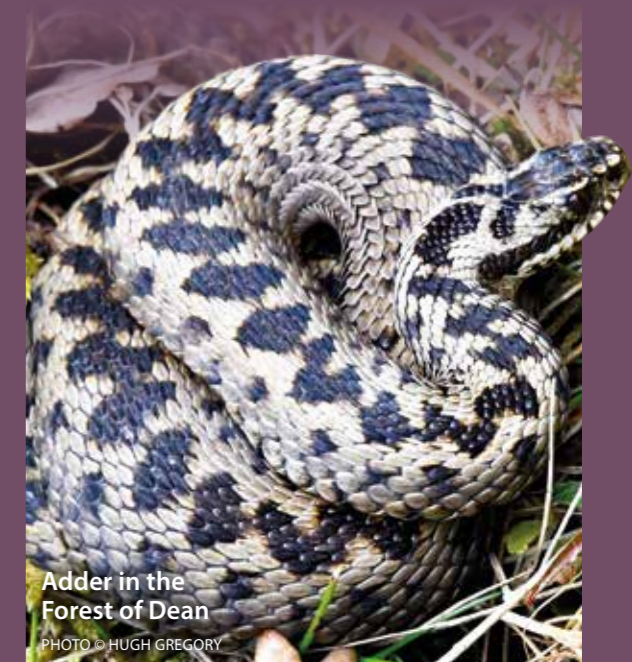
Habitat improvements for white-clawed crayfish on the River Frome

Back in July 2023, GWT was successful in securing funding from Natural England's Species Recovery Programme for our exciting River Frome Native Crayfish Recovery Project. Our native white-clawed crayfish (WCC) were once widespread throughout the upper River Frome and the streams that feed into it, but these populations are now limited to just three small headwater streams. Without action to increase the range, resilience, and viability of these remaining isolated populations, the WCC of the River Frome catchment are facing extinction.

Following assessment of these populations, we undertook four conservation translocations in early autumn 2023, with carefully selected crayfish from two streams moved to other suitable streams on the Ruscombe, Sheepscombe and Slad Brooks. It will be some years before we can confirm that self-sustaining populations have been established at these new sites, however in addition to these conservation translocations, multiple WCC habitat enhancements have been implemented at various sites throughout the project area to further boost the success of this work.

Habitat improvements for adders on the Cotswold Escarpment NRZ

In September, we began work on an eighteen month project, Recovering Adders on the Cotswold Escarpment. The project is working across GWT nature reserves and with neighbouring landowners at eight locations, with targeted habitat management taking place to enhance these sites for adders. Already, new hedgerows have been planted, scrub cut to maintain grassland scrub mosaics, and woodland edge managed to create a more diverse structure, which adders need. The project team and volunteers will be busy over the coming months, aiming to ensure this endangered species recovers successfully along the Cotswold Escarpment, made possible with funding from Natural England's Species Recovery Programme.



Adder in the Forest of Dean

PHOTO © HUGH GREGORY

...continued:
**How we're
doing against
our plans**

Lower Woods grazing project

We have started looking in detail at plans to reintroduce grazing at Lower Woods (pictured). Validating the facts on the ground has started with a review of the extensive literature on the history of this nature reserve, as well as current information such as ecological survey data. This project is indicative of just one of the changes we are making across our nature reserves, as we move to use more natural processes wherever possible. At Lower Woods, we will be combining the best of traditional management methods with modern technological solutions, to achieve the best outcome for wildlife.

PHOTO © NATHAN MILLAR

GRASwolds

Following several months over the summer of 2023 engaging with farmers and answering questions posed by the Department for Environment and Rural Affairs (Defra), we submitted an application to round two of the Environmental Land Management Schemes (ELMs) Landscape Recovery (LR) pilot schemes (now there's a mouthful!). Following our engagement work and discussions, 40 farmers covering over 3,800 hectares of land in the central Cotswolds had agreed to restore and create grassland and scrub habitats, under the banner of GRASwolds- Grassland Recovery at Scale in the Cotswolds.

Sadly, this application was declined by Defra, with one of the reasons being the contribution this pilot project could make to climate change mitigation. There is a lack of published research on the ability of this type of grassland habitat to take in carbon. We are now in the process of addressing this and have secured funding to work through a net zero expert at Hartpury University, from Cotswolds National Landscapes (CNL) with a Defra Farming in Protected Landscape (FiPL) grant. This work will measure the carbon in soil and vegetation, against the habitat, as defined by the UK Habitats system, which is the habitats assessment used at GWT.

Having begun work to address this gap in the research, we intend to make the necessary additions and to apply for a round three ELMs Landscape Recovery pilot when it is launched. It is still our ambition that GRASwolds will help to create a significant area of extremely valuable habitat in our county, so watch this space.



PHOTO © NATHAN MILLAR

Connecting people with nature

Delivering the Gloucester and Cheltenham Waterscapes project

Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust are partnering with RSA Insurance to deliver the Gloucester and Cheltenham Waterscapes project. The project is now well underway and has seen some great successes, including the creation of a swale with tree and wildflower planting in Naunton Park in Cheltenham, plus rain gardens at Tuffley Community Association and Gloucestershire Royal Hospital, with a joint holding capacity of over 1,500 litres of water. The team have delivered educational opportunities for more than 1,500 people, and over 75m² of impermeable paving has been removed and replaced with permeable surface.

The project team are also de-paving driveways on a busy residential street in Cheltenham, working with homeowners to demonstrate the impact reducing hard surfaces in our towns and cities can have on flash flooding. Further work is planned this summer to extend a wetland at Plock Court in Gloucester and create further rain gardens and green verges in Cheltenham.

These natural flood management interventions will not only store local flood water (reducing the impacts of flooding in urban areas) but create new habitats for wildlife and cleaner water for our rivers.



A GWT rain garden Tuffley Court Community Association



PHOTO © HOLLY TURNER

Extension to the Do One Thing project

In summer 2023, we secured a four-year grant from the National Lottery Reaching Communities Fund, to continue our Do One Thing project. In September our new Project Officer, Carmen Orr, joined the Trust and has picked up on the learnings from the pilot project, to develop and start delivering the next phase of engagement work. The pilot project was delivered in Cheltenham, and our extension project is now also being delivered in Gloucester, Tewkesbury and the Forest of Dean. The Do One Thing project works with diverse groups to support people to take their first actions for the environment. Carmen is running a variety of workshops, whilst also attending events and creating informative videos, which have a total of over 1,100 views so far.

The project has got off to an amazing start, and so far more than 3,000 people have 'Done One Thing', and a further 531 people have been engaged with the project, which is also working in partnership with Tewkesbury Nature Reserve, Forest Voluntary Action Forum, Gloucestershire Gateway Trust and Planet Cheltenham, to engage as many people as possible.

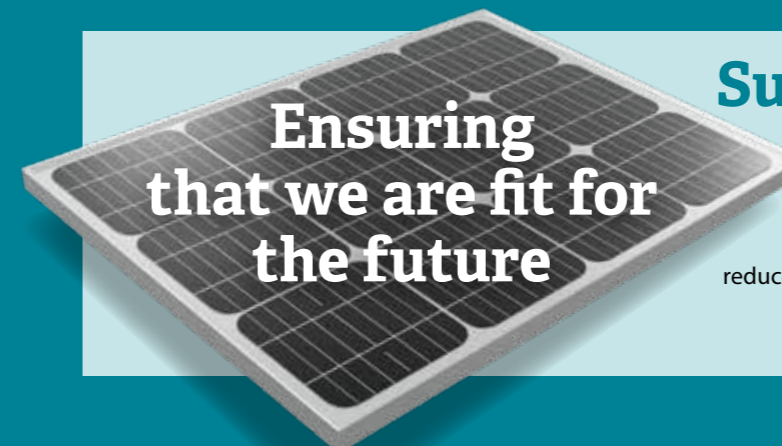
Nature Nurtures

The Nature Nurtures project is now in its third year of delivery after we managed to secure an additional year's funding from NHS Gloucestershire, via the Local Nature Partnership. The project supports children and young people who are struggling with low-level mental health issues, such as anxiety and low confidence. Over eight weekend sessions, children spend time outside in wild spaces doing activities such as den building, pond dipping and bushcraft. These group activities help build confidence, friendship, and team working skills. In April, sessions began in Gloucester, and there will be further sessions in Cheltenham, the Forest of Dean and Tewkesbury over the next year.

Every time this project runs we see huge improvements in the mental wellbeing of the children and young people taking part, and we're looking forward to seeing the positive impacts on the participants in year three. Parents and guardians can self-refer children to take part in these amazing sessions, so keep an eye on our website and social media for upcoming dates if you know a child or young person who could benefit from restorative time in nature.



Congratulations to North Cerney C of E Primary Academy – proud winners of the 2023 Wildlife Quiz



Sustainability measures at Robinswood Hill

Window films were fitted at our headquarters at Robinswood Hill to slow the rate of heat loss through the glass, and in turn reduce our carbon consumption. In an exciting development, we've now installed solar panels on the roof too. We're hoping this will save an estimated 4.56 tonnes of CO₂e per year.

Looking ahead: Our plans for 2024/25

Coaley Peak

PHOTO © NATHAN MILLAR

Continuing the delivery of our landscape-scale projects

We will continue working with our partners on the delivery of vital landscape-scale projects, with three key projects creating the focus for this work over the coming year.

Severn Treescapes will continue the creation of a 60-mile corridor of woodland connectivity across Gloucestershire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire, in partnership with Herefordshire and Worcestershire Wildlife Trusts, funded by the Trees Call to Action Fund. The fund was developed by the Department for Environment and Rural Affairs (Defra), in partnership with the Forestry Commission and is being delivered by the Heritage Fund. This year has seen the delivery of a series of orchard workshops, equipping people across the three counties with the skills to manage their fruit trees for productivity and to benefit wildlife.

Nature Returns, an extension to our Severn Solutions for Nature's Recovery project, will create and restore habitats in the west of the county, whilst monitoring soil, vegetation and biodiversity to improve the evidence base for the role of semi-natural habitats in sequestering carbon and preventing emissions of greenhouse gases. The project is one of six pilot projects taking place across the UK, funded by Natural England.

Eelscapes, delivered in partnership with WWT, the Environment Agency and 26 local landowners, will restore naturally functioning and climate-resilient floodplain wetlands, and the iconic and threatened species which depend upon them, along the Severn Vale corridor. The project is moving towards the end of the development phase and the project team are working on the development of blended finance proposals to secure the next stage of funding.

Gateway Sites review

We will launch a review of our current and potential Gateway Sites (our high-footfall visitor locations that give us the opportunity to engage supporters with our work and generate income through our cafés). We will continue to prioritise nature's recovery whilst examining ways we can use these sites to capitalise on their educational, engagement and commercial value for the good of our work and delivery of our 2030 strategy.

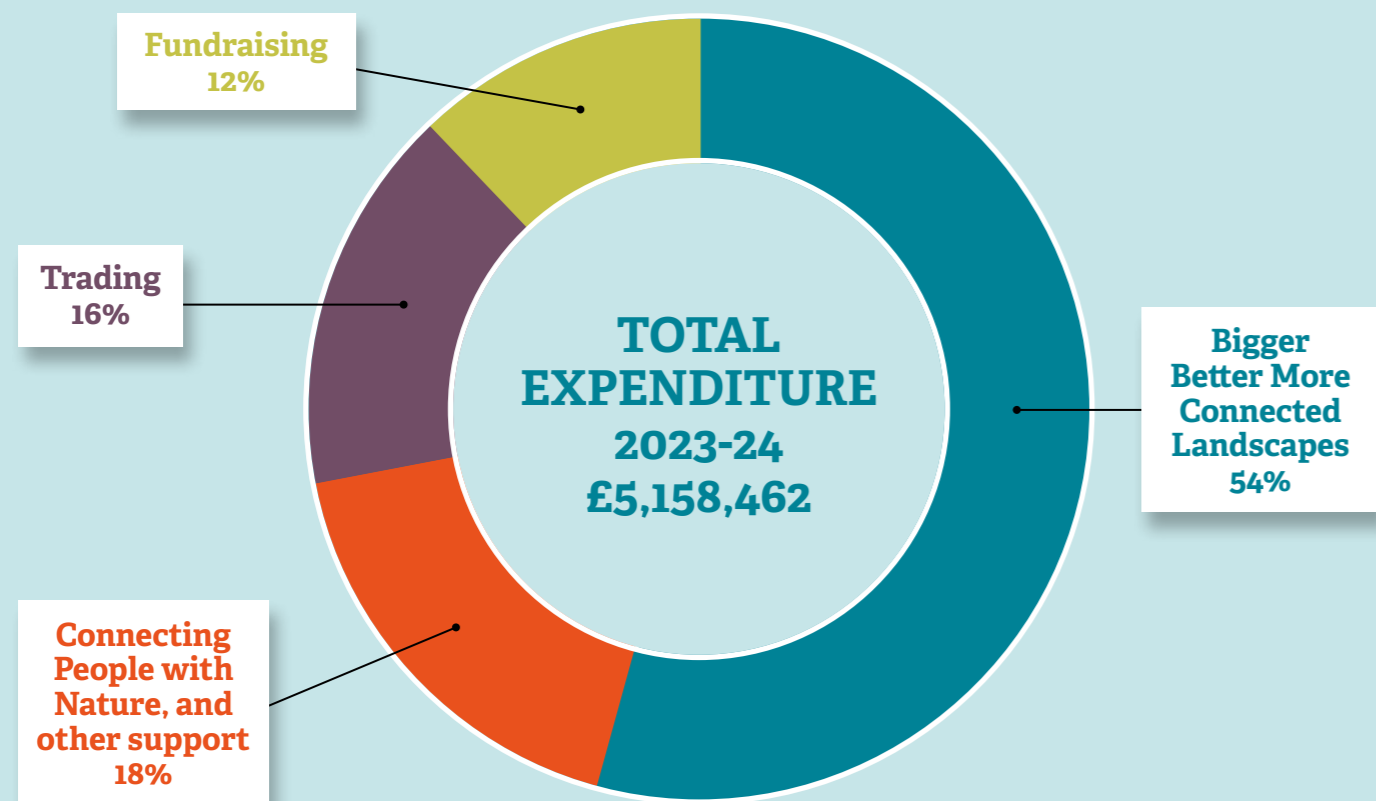
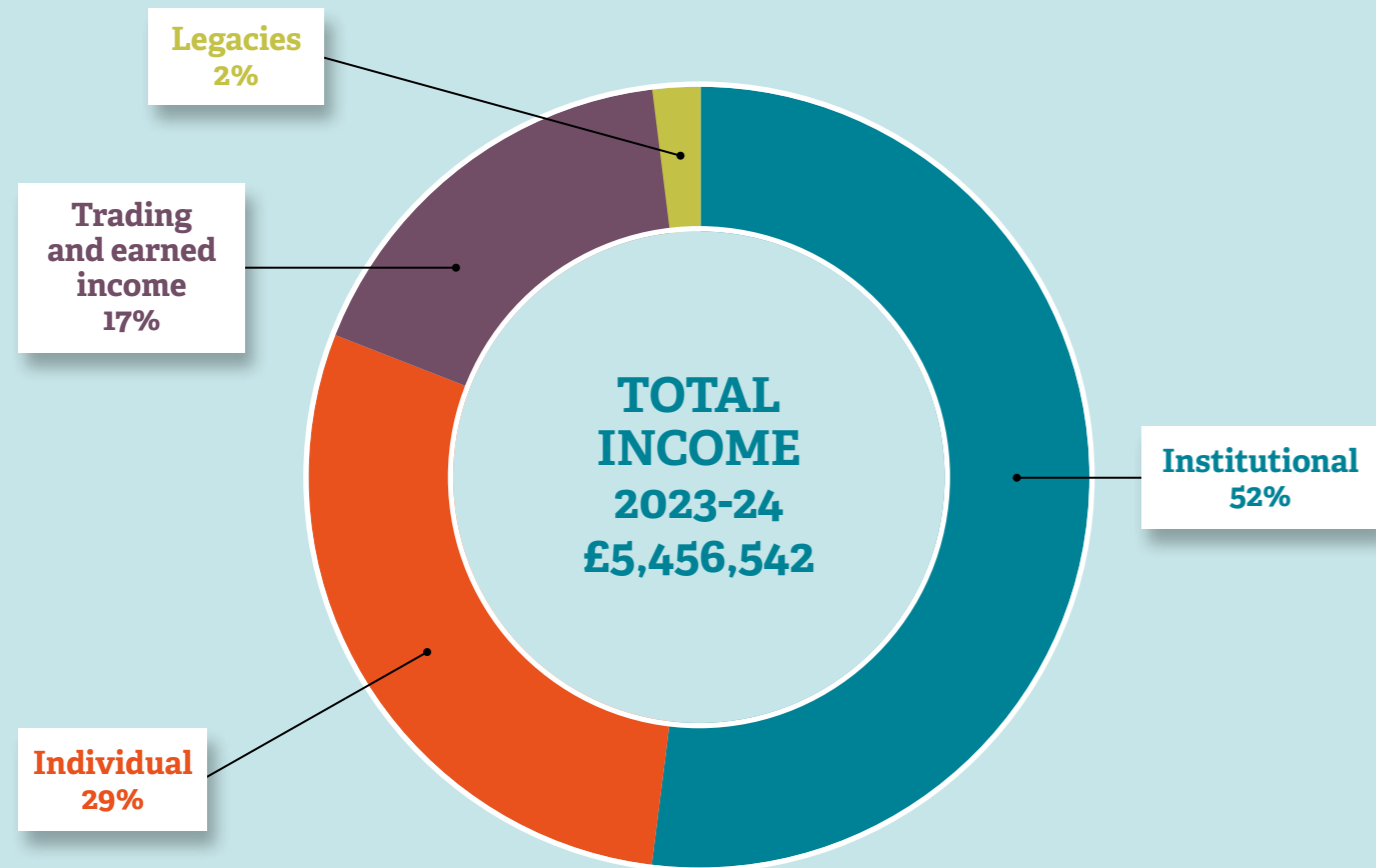
Campaigning and Advocacy

As the next UK Government will be responsible for the majority of delivery towards the UK's 2030 environmental targets, the 2024 general election was a crucial milestone on the path to achieving our strategic goals and delivering nature's recovery. We took the opportunity presented by the general election to speak with a stronger, bolder, more confident voice, to increase our impact, and raise the profile of wildlife and nature's recovery with all local candidates and the general public. We will continue this work through the first 100 days of the new government, forging and strengthening relationships with newly elected MPs and building strong connections with representatives at the local council level.

Engagement and Learning

With a newly expanded Wilder Learning Team we will increase our learning programme, expanding our activities with schools, both on our nature reserves, and at local schools on their own sites. We will also increase opportunities for younger visitors through the Nature Tots programme. Delivery of engagement projects including Carers in Nature, Do One Thing, and Gloucester Nature Park, plus our Community Action work, will continue to help us achieve our goal of reaching 1 in 4 people in the county.

Financial statement



Thank you

A huge thank you to our members, Wildlife Guardians, donors and everyone who has chosen to leave us a gift in their will this year. We could not do our vital work without you.

Charitable Trusts

- Alice Noakes Memorial Trust
- Esmee Fairbairn Foundation
- Evolution Education Trust
- Frith Trust
- George Cadbury Fund
- J & M Britton Charitable Trust
- James Tysoe Trust
- Martin Smith Foundation
- Montague Panton Animal Welfare Trust
- Ratcliff Foundation
- The Bliss Charitable Trust
- The Corn Mill Trust
- The Ernest Cook Trust
- The Extracare Charitable Trust
- The Gordon Gray Trust
- The Rowlands Trust
- The Stuart and Susan Lever Charitable Trust
- The Verdon Smith Family Charitable Settlement
- The Waterloo Foundation
- The Wild Trout Trust
- The Yarrow Trust

Corporate

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- Woolf Properties

Institutional

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- Bibury Gardening Club
- Blue Coat School
- Bognor Regis Motor Club
- Buglife
- Centurion Management
- Cheltenham Rotary Club
- Cotswolds National Landscape
- DEFRA
- Enovert Community Trust

Environment Agency

- Environment Agency
- European Regional Development Fund
- Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group SW
- Forest of Dean Quakers
- Forestry England
- Gloucester City Council
- Gloucestershire County Council
- Gloucestershire Gateway Trust
- Gloucestershire Naturalists' Society
- Gloucestershire Ramblers
- Grundon Waste Management
- Herefordshire County Council
- HM Treasury Shared Outcomes Fund
- Institute of Licensing
- Landfill Communities Fund
- Lawnside Stores
- Lower Wye Ramblers
- Natural England
- Ringway Infrastructure
- Rotary Club
- Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts
- Royal Sun Alliance
- Severn Trent Water
- Stroud Civic Society
- Stroud District Council
- The Arts Society Painswick
- The National Lottery Community Fund
- The National Lottery Heritage Fund
- Thirty Percy Foundation
- Three Shires Motor Rally
- UK Shared Prosperity Fund
- Vistry Housebuilding
- Woodland Trust
- Worcestershire County Council
- Water Environment Improvement Fund

Partnerships

- BBC Radio Gloucestershire Ourboretum
- Country Land and Business Association
- Countryside and Community Research Institute
- Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership
- Hartpury University and Hartpury College
- Hasfield Estate
- Herefordshire Wildlife Trust
- National Farmers Union
- National Trust
- Royal Entomological Society
- Severn & Wye Nature
- Severn Rivers Trust
- Severn Vale Catchment Partnership
- Sheffield and Rotherham Wildlife Trust
- Vincent Wildlife Trust
- Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust
- Worcestershire Wildlife Trust

Individual

- Anonymous donation to Education Bursary
- Anonymous donation to Wild Trainees

Additional thanks

- Ashleworth Women's Institute
- Athelstan Probus
- Bourton University of the 3rd Age
- Cheltenham Borough Council
- Cheltenham Borough Homes
- Cheltenham Rambling Club
- Cirencester Wildlife Group
- CK Futures
- Creative Sustainability
- Fair Shares
- Forest Holidays
- Friends of Barnwood Arboretum
- Friendship Café
- Gloucester Royal Hospital
- Gloucester Vale Volunteers
- Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group
- Ingleburn Trefoil
- Jenner Court Residents Assoc
- Monkscroft Care Centre
- Monkscroft Community Action Group
- Nailsworth Health
- Quedgely Town Council
- Quilter House
- Saint Pauls Residents Association
- St Mary's Discover De Crypt
- Stow and District Civic Society
- Tetbury Library
- Tewkesbury Borough Council
- University of Gloucestershire
- University of the Third Age
- Upton Twyver Probus
- Wild Stroud
- Winston and Distrct Women's Institute



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FRONT COVER WATER VOLE PHOTO © TERRY WHITTAKER2020VISION
BACK COVER BEAVER PHOTO © NICK UPTON

