



Bedfordshire
Cambridgeshire
Northamptonshire



Annual Review
2016-17

Foreword

I am delighted to introduce the 2016-17 Annual Review of the Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire. I was elected as Chair of the Trust's Council in October 2016.

This was the second year of our five-year plan, which aims by 2020 to make our three counties better for wildlife and to increase the understanding and appreciation of nature among the people who live here. The plan is being delivered across seven strands which form the structure of this annual review, with a particular focus on how we are delivering our conservation goals and how we are reaching out to people via our education and community work. We made good progress towards all these objectives in 2016/17.

In terms of the delivery strand, an important highlight was the first full year of the new monitoring and research team. Having an innovative and focused programme of work in this area enables the Trust's conservation activities to be driven forward by a strong evidence-led approach. A number of its findings feature in this report.

2016/17 also brought significant progress in the Nene Valley, including the decision to manage the Nene Wetlands nature reserve and the planning of the Trust's first visitor centre inside the new Rushden Lakes retail park. The award from the Heritage Lottery Fund for all our work here will help us to make this Living Landscape flourish for people and wildlife. Parallel progress was made at other new sites such as Trumpington Meadows in Cambridge and Lilbourne Meadows in Northamptonshire.

In June 2016 the Wildlife Trust movement, of 47 Wildlife Trusts, celebrated the second "30 Days Wild," and this annual campaign is gaining momentum at both national and local level. Nearly 50,000 people signed up to do something wild every day in June, and many famous faces lent their support, including Ellie Harrison and Levison Wood. In our three counties, it generated much activity on social media and in schools, with for example Manor School Sports College in Raunds, Northamptonshire raising more than £780. Many thanks to them!

Many thanks too to every one of our 1,000+ volunteers and 36,000+ members. Every aspect of the Trust's activities depends crucially on the support they provide. Their commitment to improving the natural environment in our three counties is constantly in the minds of those of us who have the honour to serve on the Trust's Council, and I would urge anyone who shares that concern to come and join in the Trust's activities.

*Sir Graham Fry,
Chairman of the Council*



The Trust in 2016-17

Our vision "People close to nature, in a land rich in wildlife"

Our mission

- To conserve local wildlife by caring for land ourselves and with others
- To inspire others to take action for wildlife
- To inform people, by offering advice and sharing knowledge

Our numbers


126 nature reserves
covering more than
4,000 hectares


105 members
of staff

More than
1000
volunteers

95% of our local population
live within five miles of
one of our reserves


445

training places were
offered on our Wildlife
Training Workshops

36,000
members



Our five year plan

Delivery

We will create Living Landscapes at the heart of the local community, enhancing our nature reserves and basing our management on sound research and monitoring

Reaching out

We will engage with people to inspire them about the natural world and encourage them to take action for wildlife

People and culture

We will become the conservation organisation that people want to support and work for, and enable staff and volunteers to excel in their roles

Partners

We will build strong and effective partnerships that benefit wildlife, the Trust and others

Finance

We will ensure the Trust is a financially viable and sustainable organisation by growing and diversifying our income to deliver our goals now and in the future



Delivery – our Living Landscapes

We're working with other landowners and managers to create 'joined up' landscapes that are more valuable for wildlife, with space to move between our reserves as well as through them.

We call these spaces Living Landscapes, and they mean that wild flower seeds have places to settle and grow, birds to hunt and butterflies to find nectar - connecting the invaluable habitats created by our reserves with the wider environment. They are good for people too. A healthy environment aids food production and gives us clean air and water. It gives us places to explore and enjoy.

Creating Living Landscapes takes a lot of time, resource, co-operation and goodwill to achieve. So this is where the Trust will focus most of its energy for years to come, because we believe it will pay the biggest dividends for wildlife.

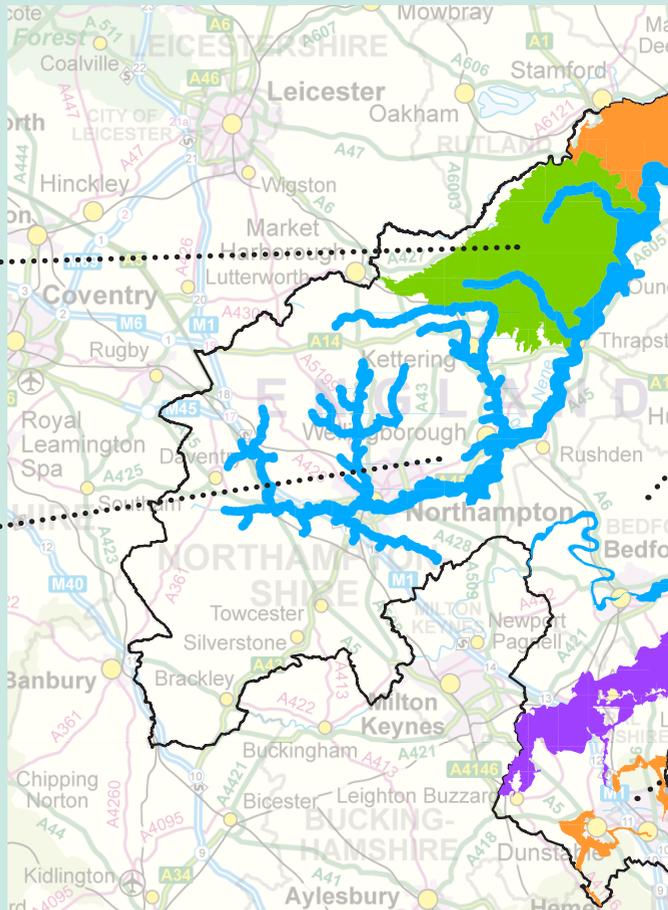
We continue to make progress on all of our Living Landscapes, and have picked some of our favourite highlights of 2016/17.

Rockingham Forest, Northamptonshire

We supported the "Back from the Brink" project, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and worked with Butterfly Conservation, specifically looking at the reintroduction of the chequered skipper butterfly to the area.

Nene Valley, Northamptonshire

We have taken on the management of the Nene Wetlands nature reserve, a complex of wetlands within the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits Special Protection Area, which includes the Trust's first visitor centre. This connects four existing Trust nature reserves, and will be managed as a single large site called the Nene Wetlands, covering 270 hectares (667 acres) of some of the most important habitat in Northamptonshire.



Great Fen, Cambridgeshire

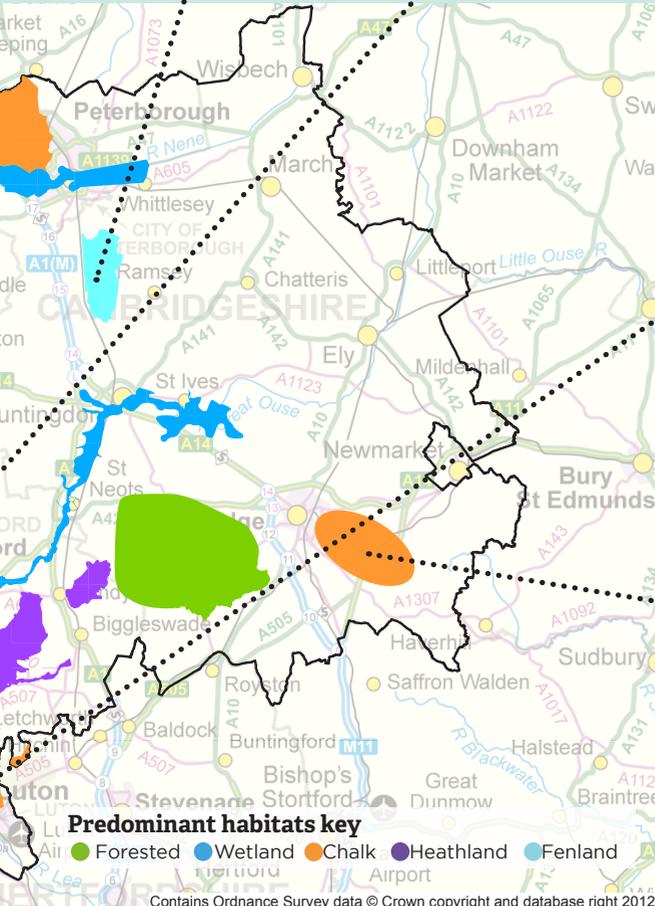
It's been a year of consolidation for the Great Fen, as the current HLF funded period ends in June 2017. An extension to the original timetable was given to complete the final stages of the major hydrological scheme for wetland creation at New Decoy and Corney's Farms. An evaluation report for the HLF on the entire 8-year project is underway in order to apply all we've learnt to other projects.

Ouse Valley, Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire

In Bedfordshire, our Water for Wildlife project, funded by Anglian Water and the Environment Agency, launched a new "River Wardens" scheme to involve volunteers in efforts to monitor and improve the water environment.

North Chilterns Chalk, Bedfordshire

We continue to work with a network of partners to further our objectives within the North Chilterns. Working with Cemex at Kensworth Quarry, for example, is improving the conditions for the last surviving population of wild junipers. Working in this way has also meant that we have been able to support the restoration of a number of Local Wildlife Sites, as well as improve the management of our own nature reserves.



**Bedfordshire
Cambridgeshire
Northamptonshire**

Cambridgeshire Chalk

Restoration work was undertaken on two chalk grassland sites through the Gog Magogs restoration project funded by Biffa Award and corporate donations. At Fulbourn Fen we started using a new tool, a "tree-popper," to remove scrub (including roots) from the meadow, which has been highly successful.

Delivery

– managing and enhancing our nature reserves for wildlife and people

A few of our wildlife and reserve highlights of the year:

- ▶ Hazel dormouse records were confirmed outside Brampton Wood, showing that the population is spreading beyond the reintroduction site.
- ▶ A large portion of our Godmanchester reserve was made accessible to wheelchair users, with the installation of radar gates and surfaced paths.
- ▶ Water beetle and bug surveys across the three counties have recorded over 9,000 specimens – including 21 Nationally Scarce and 6 IUCN Near Threatened species.



The full list of our achievements can be found in the Annual Report online.

The Trust's network of nature reserves is managed by 30 staff in three county-based teams, with crucial support from volunteers. We manage our nature reserves in order to conserve or enhance their wildlife value and where possible, provide opportunities for quiet recreation.

Grazing continues to play a key role in the management of reserves; this year over 20 reserves were grazed or partially grazed by our own livestock and over 40 reserves were grazed or jointly grazed by other graziers' livestock.

A new reserve at Trumpington Meadows, Cambridge was officially opened in June 2016. Since then, a pair of otters has been spotted on the River Cam, and the first record for historical Cambridgeshire was noted for the sandy stilt-puffball, a fungus listed in the Red Data Book. Three sites are no longer managed by the Trust: Eye Green and Pingle Wood in Cambridgeshire and Houghton Regis Quarry in Bedfordshire. At Eye Green, we will continue to support Peterborough City Council to ensure suitable future management of the reserve. Unfortunately the new owner of Pingle Wood decided not to renew the Trust's lease, and at Houghton Regis our funding agreement ended in March 2017 but we are hoping the management gap is temporary and that our full involvement in this important site will resume in the near future.

Implementation of our dog policy was trialled at Fulbourn Fen, with the aim of minimising the impact of dogs on the wildlife and grazing livestock of the site. The trial has proved a success and has resulted in a noticeable change in behaviour amongst dog walkers.

And over to the birds for our final highlights: a red-necked grebe caused a stir at Grafham Water this year, lapwing and redshank took up territories at the Nene Washes, bitterns and marsh harrier are resident at Dogsthorpe Star Pit and at sites within the Great Fen, and murmurations of more than 20,000 starlings have been seen over the Godmanchester reed beds.

Delivery

– promoting wildlife conservation outside of our reserves

The Trust believes everyone has a role to play in restoring nature. Without the active support and involvement of other organisations and individuals in managing their own land for wildlife, or enabling others to do so, we will not achieve our vision for a Living Landscape. Good relations with stakeholder organisations such as local authorities, statutory agencies and the wider conservation sector are vital.

We are particularly proud of the following achievements:

 The Trust has been supporting the Wildlife Trusts/Jordans Cereal partnership nationally and assessed two Jordans farms, advising on new farm management plans.

 Planning casework increased in 2016/17 and we objected to several speculative planning applications which would be damaging to wildlife. We have reviewed and commented on local plans in all districts in Cambridgeshire, as well as objecting to several large-scale housing allocations or developments.

 Trust representatives, alongside those from the Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts, met Andrea Leadsom MP (at the time Secretary of State for the Environment) at Dovecote Meadows Local Wildlife Site to show her an example of meadow restoration and natural flood management with the support of the local landowner.

 In the final year of HRH Prince Charles's Coronation Meadows project, wildflower and grass seeds from Fancott Wood and Meadows nature reserve in Bedfordshire were hand sown onto Limbury Mead grassland in Luton. In conjunction with the Woodland Trust, 56 tree packs (2,500 trees) were distributed from the Trust's Northamptonshire office for planting by land-owners at the Yardley Whittlewood Ridge.



Our work on **Local Wildlife Sites (LWS)** – spaces important for wildlife but not owned by us – continues to be the most important conservation work we undertake beyond managing nature reserves, and there are more than 1,600 LWS in our patch. We engage with owners, survey the sites and seek to get them into positive management. We are pleased that more sites in Northamptonshire are now in positive management compared to last year. Eighteen sites across our three counties were brought into positive management.

A record number of indicator species such as agrimony (pictured) were found on Local Wildlife Sites this year.

Delivery

- sound research and monitoring

2016-17 saw the first full year of the Trust's new Monitoring and Research team. Volunteers spent more than 5,700 hours monitoring mammals, birds, plants and invertebrates, as part of 174 monitoring projects across 65 reserves.

We collect data over the long-term to detect trends and their causes which direct the conservation management of our nature reserves. The results are also shared with a wide audience.

This year, the team has delivered:

-  The first Monitoring and Research Conference at Cambourne Village College, Cambridgeshire, with over 120 people attending.
-  Aerial surveys using the Trust's drone at 11 sites.
-  The production of the first four 'Local Wildlife In Depth' newsletters for volunteers, researchers and others interested in more detailed updates from our Monitoring and Research team.
-  A BioBlitz - where as many living species are recorded as possible in an intensive, time-limited field study - at Godmanchester nature reserve, organised in association with the British and Irish Association of Zoos and Aquaria (BIAZA), as part of their partnership with the Trust.
-  A new trial of the rapid grassland survey method, which assesses the condition of grassland features for 28 compartments at 16 reserves across the three counties.
-  Staff training in river corridor surveys.
-  New dormouse boxes, constructed by volunteers with equipment paid for by the Forestry Commission.



The Trust continues to host and support the three Local Biological Record Centres covering each county:

-  Bedfordshire Biodiversity Recording and Monitoring Centre (BRMC).
-  Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Environmental Records Centre (CPERC).
-  Northamptonshire Biodiversity Records Centre (NBRC).

Reaching out

– education and community

The Trust engages with local communities in a variety of ways to grow support for nature conservation and inspire people to take action for local wildlife.

The Education and Community team engaged with 16,451 people during 2016-17, and our Living Landscapes played host to many enjoyable and notable events.

Great Fen



During February half-term the Great Fen team worked with local LEGO® enthusiasts Catherine Weightman and Mike Addis to create a giant map of the Great Fen made of LEGO® which was visited by over 1,000 people.



Following the Spitfire excavation last year, a plaque was unveiled at a dedication ceremony in September 2016, as a permanent memorial to Pilot Officer Harold Edwin Penketh, who was killed when the Spitfire crashed.



Nene Valley



The Trust was awarded £662,800 by the Heritage Lottery Fund to deliver conservation and engagement activities on the Nene Wetlands.



The Trust promoted and delivered five events as part of the Nene Valley Festival, including a very popular guided bat walk at Summer Leys.

North Chilterns Chalk



At Blow's Downs a visitor survey was carried out, repeating a survey previously conducted in 2007, before the Guided Busway was in place. Visits have risen to more than 115,000 per year, from just under 66,000 in 2007.



The Trust has been supported by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation to deliver a suite of education and community activities in the North Chilterns Chalk. Over three years we have engaged with approximately 5,500 people, held 100 outreach activities and 75 onsite events, and recruited and trained 30 volunteers.

Ouse Valley



The Environmental Education Centre at Paxton Pits nature reserve delivered school programmes to over 1,200 children. Nearly 5,000 people took part in activities at the centre this year.



Paxton Pits hosted a small number of work experience students in 2016-17. A visiting teacher reported this was by far the most successful placement and one of the students said his "confidence has grown so much".

Reaching out

– beyond Living Landscapes

Our excellent education and community work extends across our three counties, working with corporate partners and other wildlife organisations, and through well-established channels from membership to Wildlife Watch.

Membership

Our strength comes from our supporters, and their views and engagement are key in guiding our activity.

- ✦ As of March 2017, the Trust had 18,335 memberships (equivalent to 36,060 members), a 1.5% increase in memberships on the previous year.
- ✦ Individual membership provided £1,236,176 of unrestricted income.

Wildlife Training Workshops

Wildlife Training Workshops are available free to all our active volunteers. Our programme remains among the most comprehensive and highly regarded in the country, with new workshops for this year such as warbler identification and the ecology and identification of freshwater bivalves. The programme continues to receive very positive feedback overall. In the last financial year, there were 42 workshops with 445 places offered in total.

Wildlife Watch

We have 18 Wildlife Watch groups, which were attended by 1,365 children of all ages in 2016-17.

Local Groups

There are currently 14 Local Groups in our three counties and our Chief Executive and senior staff have attended many meetings and events across the year. Local Groups raised £17,154 in 2016-17.

Our other highlights

- ✦ The three-year Go Wild! Project in Peterborough, funded by the Caterpillar Foundation through Perkins, was completed. The project directly engaged with 5,308 people and more than 34,000 have benefitted from Go Wild! activities.
- ✦ A Trumpington Meadows mobile app for iOS and Android was launched in September as part of our endeavour to communicate with members and potential members in different ways. The app provides visitors with an inside look at the wildlife and history of the site.
- ✦ In December we invited the local community and members to “Christmas at the Manor House” at our Cambourne office; more than 100 people attended.

People and culture

Our staff

We have more than 105 full and part-time staff, who are continuing to perform at a high level, providing an important contribution to wildlife conservation locally, regionally and nationally.

For the third year running, the Trust secured a Silver Award in the Chartered Institute of Public Relations Pride Awards in the Anglia, Thames and Chiltern area for our communications work on the Spitfire excavation.

“Our staff and volunteers are key to the success of the organisation. They have huge passion and dedication and I am very proud of both them and the work we do for wildlife and people in our area.”

Brian Eversham, Chief Executive

In October 2016, local author, former Wildlife Trust employee and a member for more than 30 years, Derek Niemann published his new book “A Tale of Trees” (Short Books) about the fate of Britain’s ancient woodlands. It focussed in particular on our reserve at Waresley and Gransden Woods.

Our volunteers

We have more than 1,000 volunteers, who are essential to all aspects of the Trust’s work.

-  Our nature reserve wardens and volunteers help to manage our nature reserves and welcome visitors.
-  Mid-week work parties and corporate work teams tackle conservation management tasks on reserves.
-  Watch leaders provide exciting activities for younger members.
-  Local Group officers and committees ensure that a diverse and interesting range of talks, walks and events is available to members and the public throughout our area.
-  Ecology Group volunteers monitor our nature reserves; office volunteers help with a huge range of tasks; and Trustees provide governance and support to the staff.



Chris Sykes receives The Richenda Huxley Award, recognising an outstanding contribution to any aspect of the work of the Trust, from Baroness Young of Old Scone



Partners

Our five year plan emphasises the need to work in partnership with other organisations to maximise our influence. Across the three counties we have worked with all the major local authorities, such as Amphill Town Council; with all the major government agencies, including the Forestry Commission; and with other major wildlife charities such as the RSPB, the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust and the Greensand Trust. We continue to work with the Environment Agency, Huntingdonshire District Council, Natural England and the Middle Level Commissioners to deliver the Great Fen project in Cambridgeshire. In addition, the Trust continues to play a leading role in the three Local Nature Partnerships (LNP) in Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire.

A full list of the many organisations we worked with in 2016-17 is published in our Annual Report, available online.

As at March 2017 our corporate members were:

Platinum

The Biodiversity Consultancy
Cambridge Building Society

Gold

Hewitsons
Prologis UK Ltd
UK Power Networks

Silver

Anglian Water Ltd
Arqiva Ltd
Central England Co-operative
NFU Mutual Cambridge
Orton Hall Hotel and Spa
PalmerSport
Scott Bader
Scudamore's Punting Company
Unilever Research Colworth

Bronze

Alpro Soya, Building Services Design,
Cambridge Steiner School, Cambridge
University Press, Center Parcs Woburn
Forest, Colpac Ltd, David Ball Group,
Gardenworks Tree Surgery, Granta Park,
Kier Homes, KierWSP, Lafarge Tarmac,
Method, Roem Ltd, Wesley Coe

Standard - Acorn House Veterinary Surgery, An Norvys, Athene Communications, Barnwell Trailers, British Racing Drivers' Club, Cambridge Belfry Hotel, Cambridge Econometrics Ltd, Cambridge Regional College, Cambridge Water Company, Canoe2, Cemex, Centrica (Peterborough Power Station), Cranfield University, Creative Tops, Downing College Cambridge, GreenAir Cars, Hellidon Lakes Golf & Spa Hotel, Highgate House, JB Shropshire & Sons, The Jordans & Ryvita Company Ltd, Lockhart Garrett Ltd, The Marshall Group of Companies, Moulton College Ltd, Perkins Group Ltd, Richard Buxton Environmental & Public Law, Rotary Club of St Neots St Mary's, RPS Group, RWE Generation UK, Spendlove Contracting, Vine House Farm, Weetabix, Wellcome Trust, Whittlebury Park LLP, Willowbrook.

Business Supporters - Ark House Veterinary Surgery, Carter Jonas, Emmanuel College, Greens of Soham, Mackays, Trinity College University of Northampton.

We would also like to thank the following who have supported the Trust financially and with help in kind:

Anglian Water Flourishing Environment Fund, Anglian Water (EA Mitigation), Arjuna Wholefoods, ARM Holdings, Augean Community Fund, The Banister Charitable Trust, The Benham Charitable Settlement, BGL Group, Biffa Award, Cambridge Festival of Running, Cambridge Chamber of Commerce, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge Water, Cambridgeshire County Council Community Reach Fund, Carillion, Caterpillar Perkins, Canoe2, Center Parcs, Chilterns Conservation Board, Clark Bradbury Charitable Trust, Douglas Compton James Charitable Trust, The D S Smith Charitable Foundation, East Northamptonshire Council, The February Foundation, The Frederick and Phyllis Cann Trust, Gamlingay Community Turbine Tithe Fund, The Geoffrey C Hughes Charitable Trust, Glassmoor Local Environment Fund, Granta Park, Grosvenor/USS, Heritage Lottery Fund, Hewitsons, The Jack Patston Charitable Trust, John Lewis, Kingsthorpe Manor and Town Charity, London Luton Airport (Operations) Ltd Community Fund, Miss Edith Mary Sage Charitable Trust, Mr and Mrs M G M Bevan Charitable Trust, Mrs B L Robinson's Charitable Trust, New View Residential, The Northwick Trust, Opticron, Pauline Meredith Charitable Trust, The Raven Charitable Trust, Red Tile Wind Farm Trust Fund Ltd, Robert Kiln Charitable Trust, The Robin and Henrietta Woods Charitable Trust (1976), The St Mary's Charity, The Spear Charitable Trust, Thriplow Charitable Trust, Scudamore's Punting Company, Syncreon Technology UK Ltd, Tesco, TRSFM Charity Trust, Unilever Research Colworth, The Veolia Environmental Trust, The Vera Joan Millinch Charitable Trust, Vine House Farm, Viridor Credits, Wakefield Trust, The Wild Flower Society, Wildlife Travel, The William Haddon Charitable Trust, The Wixamtree Trust, The Wyvill Charitable Trust, WREN Community Action Fund.

Finance

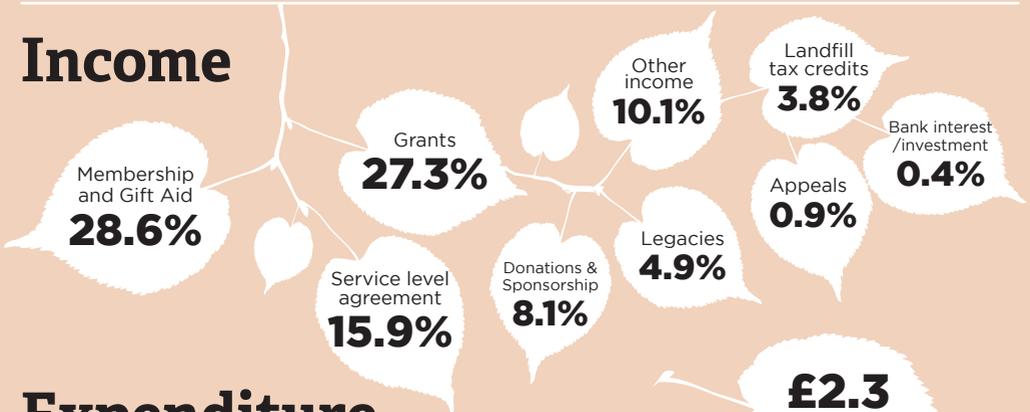
The Trustees remain confident in the underlying health of the Trust's finances, a summary of which is included here. The full statement is included in our Annual Report, available online.

Broadly speaking, the Trust's finances are divided into restricted funds, where monies raised must be spent on specific purposes, and unrestricted funds, which can be applied to general charitable activities. This year, the Trust's activities resulted in an unrestricted deficit of £0.4 million with a restricted deficit of £0.04 million, resulting in total net assets of £19.7 million (£17.26 million attributable to restricted activities).

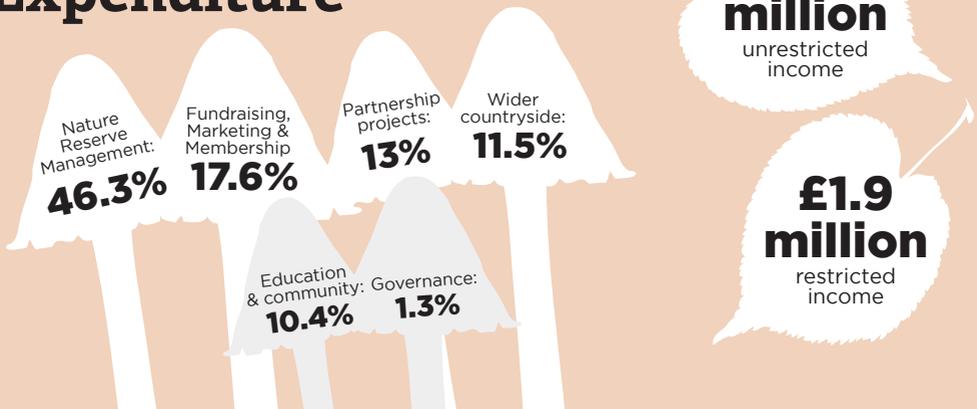
Competition for grants from sources such as the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Landfill Communities Fund has increased while the sums available have reduced. We are actively working on new sources of funding, such as Carbon Capture, and we are seeking to grow voluntary income from individuals and corporate supporters as well as keeping strong control of costs.

Financial support has come from many quarters, including via the support of all our members, donors, partners and funding bodies. We are particularly grateful for all the monies received from In Memoriam giving, and to those people who generously remembered us with a gift in their Will. We were the grateful beneficiary of significant legacies this year, left to us in the Wills of Andreas Spaul, Joan Sylvia Williams, Professor Oliver Rackham and Pauline Barlow. The family of the late Andrew Marten also remembered the Trust with a generous In Memory gift of £33,000 to help keep High Wood and Meadow reserve in Northamptonshire special for wildlife and people for years to come.

Income



Expenditure



The year ahead...

Reaching out

We are always looking to develop our Trust membership, as this remains the heart of our supporter base. We want to engage visitors at our nature reserves and events and continue the steady increase of visitors to our website. We are also hopeful that the national “30 Days Wild” campaign will attract a larger audience to encourage them to take action for wildlife.



Partnerships with local businesses

Strong partnerships with key local businesses will remain a priority. A new relationship has begun with developers LXB, who manage the Rushden Lakes site while we manage the nature reserve for the owners, the Crown Estate. We aim to gain the support of other large local companies and national companies headquartered in the three counties.

Working with developers

Although the Trust will oppose developments which are seriously damaging to important sites, we aim to work actively with developers, both before and after planning permission is granted, to build in significant benefits for wildlife. This approach has already improved the habitats of Cambourne and Trumpington Meadows near Cambridge.



New nature reserve

The Trust will move to a management role at Lilbourne Meadows, Northamptonshire, a new 70 hectare (172 acre) nature reserve being created as part of the development of the Daventry International Rail Freight Terminal. There is a network of ponds and wetlands particularly suitable for great crested newts, a large man-made bat-house, and an open mosaic of grassland, which will be accessible to the public.



National impact

This Trust will continue to play a leading role in The Wildlife Trusts movement nationally, serving on working groups, leading initiatives, piloting new schemes and sharing good practice with other Trusts.

Carbon capture

Natural and semi-natural habitats such as woodlands, wetlands, and especially peatlands, are able to store much larger quantities of organic carbon than intensive agricultural land or built-up areas. So there is potential for many aspects of the Trust's land management to offer benefits in terms of carbon storage.

Peatland soils such as those in the Great Fen gradually erode and decompose if the land is drained and cultivated, releasing large amounts of carbon dioxide.

We are now working to attract sponsorship from businesses that wish to offset their unavoidable carbon dioxide emissions.



Technology

The use of drones and image analysis to support land and habitat management activities continues to grow and develop as we move on to finding new ways in which aerial imagery can be processed.

We are also always looking for new ways to communicate with our members and potential members. The introduction of a new Trumpington Meadows app for smartphones gives visitors a new and modern way of learning about the wildlife and history of the site. We are looking forward to a new website in 2018 that will be optimised for mobile devices.



**Bedfordshire
Cambridgeshire
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Trust information

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Registered charity number:

1000412



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Front cover: Tansy beetle © Frank Porch