



Bedfordshire
Cambridgeshire
Northamptonshire



ANNUAL REVIEW 2014-15

Foreword by Derek Langslow CBE

Image: by Phil Mynott



During the year we produced our new five-year vision which will shape and guide our work from 2015 until 2020. Our aim is that by then our three counties will be better for wildlife than they are in 2015.

Our vision also focuses on strengthening the way we work and building the ethos of outreach, engagement and promotion of the Trust's work among all our staff and volunteers. All parts of the organisation have been successful in promoting local wildlife for many years, but could be even better at promoting the Wildlife Trust as the primary organisation which needs the support of local people to conserve local wildlife.

Within the Trust, we are developing the ways we engage people at our nature reserves and events to encourage them to support the Trust and to take action for wildlife. These have included the launch of My Wild Life – a national campaign to increase awareness and support for the Wildlife Trusts and encourage people to share their wildlife experiences with us.

We continue to develop our activity and profile on social media which has led to a steady increase in the numbers of visitors to our website. We are also exploring other ways that people can support our objectives, such as our petition to save Godmanchester nature reserve (see page 10).

Strong partnerships with key local businesses will remain valuable to the Trust, such as Caterpillar Perkins' support for our conservation work in Peterborough and BGL supporting education work in the Great Fen. We aim to gain the support of other large local companies, and from national companies based in the three counties.

The Trust will continue to oppose developments which are seriously damaging to important wildlife sites, but we aim to work actively with developers, both before and after planning permission is granted, to build in benefits for wildlife. This approach has already improved conditions for wildlife at Cambourne, Houghton Regis Quarry and Trumpington Meadows in Cambridge.

At the heart of the Nene Valley, a new partnership with the retail development at Rushden Lakes will fund the Trust to manage an area of internationally important wildlife habitats. The new reserve will also link together our reserves at Ditchford, Higham Ferrers, Wilson's Pits and Irthlingborough, creating a single large

nature reserve, with potential for a visitor centre at the edge of the new retail park.

Derek Langslow

▼ Scarlet tiger moths recorded for the first time at Flitwick Moor.



Image: by Chris Manley

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

Our mission is to:

- ✓ Conserve local wildlife, by caring for land ourselves and with others
- ✓ Inspire others to take action for wildlife
- ✓ Inform people, by offering advice and sharing knowledge

Our values:

We believe

- That we must focus on all wildlife and whole ecosystems to safeguard the natural environment
- That everyone has a role to play in restoring nature
- That we should value, respect and listen to our staff, volunteers, members and supporters so they can contribute fully to achieving our vision
- That working in partnership brings more benefits than working alone
- That conservation depends on local knowledge and good science
- That we achieve more for wildlife by operating in an efficient and business-like manner
- That we should operate in an environmentally sustainable way
- That working to restore nature should be rewarding for everyone involved

◀ We won the prestigious Sandford Award for our education work in the Great Fen.



Image: by Wildlife Trust

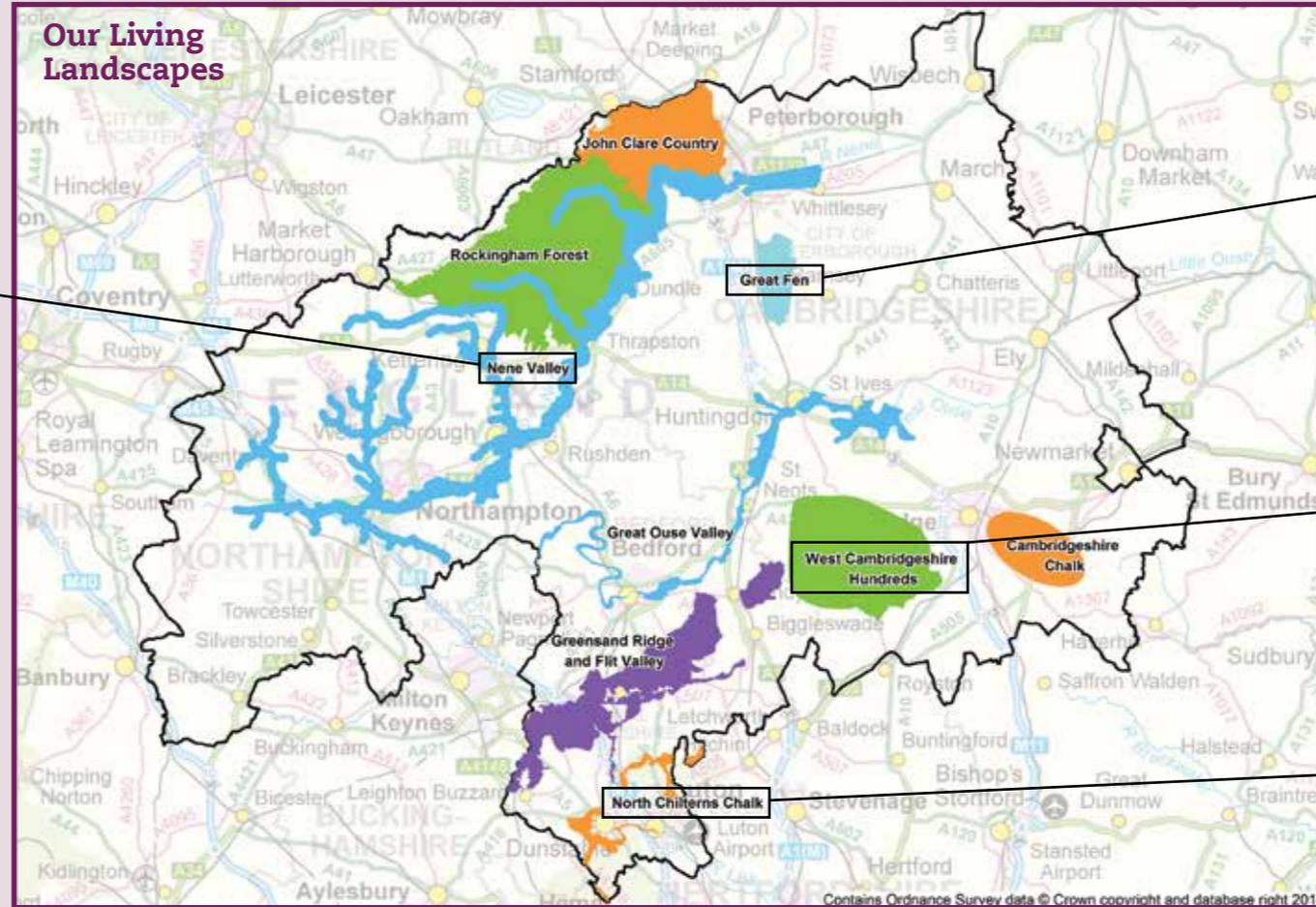
Living Landscapes

The Wildlife Trust has continued to focus on nine Living Landscapes. Four of these have been our priority schemes where we see the best opportunities for wildlife and focus much of our effort. Our Living Landscapes cover 140,287 hectares (approx. 346,657 acres) and include some of the most important habitats across our three counties. In these areas we deliver nature conservation on a more ambitious scale to ensure that areas of habitat are bigger, better and more joined and therefore better for nature and wildlife. Each Living Landscape contains a network of Trust reserves, Local Wildlife Sites, farmland and towns and villages.

In the **Nene Valley** the Trust's work focused on delivering the third and final year of the government funded Nene Valley Nature Improvement Area (NIA) where achievements have included:

- **115 hectares of wildflower meadow restored or created.**
- **Visitor studies that have demonstrated that the Nene Valley attracts at least 2.4 million visitors each year,**
- **An assessment which demonstrates that nature provides £118.7 million in services to the local economy each year.**

Scheme name	County
Great Fen (Priority)	Cambridgeshire
Nene Valley (Priority)	Northamptonshire and Cambridgeshire
North Chilterns Chalk (Priority)	Bedfordshire
West Cambridgeshire Hundreds (Priority)	Cambridgeshire
Cambridgeshire Chalk	Cambridgeshire
Greensand Ridge and Flit Valley	Bedfordshire
John Clare Country	Northamptonshire and Cambridgeshire
Great Ouse Valley	Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire
Rockingham Forest	Northamptonshire



The **Great Fen** education team continued to shine and were awarded the Sandford Award for Heritage Education – a prestigious national award. Past winners include the Giant's Causeway, Hampton Court Palace and the National Museum of Wales; the Great Fen is considered to be on a par with these major heritage sites.

In the **West Cambridgeshire Hundreds** the Trust worked with the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust to develop a research project proposal for an MSc. student to assess pollinator populations in different habitats on the edges of arable fields.

The re-establishment of the **North Chilterns Chalk** Managers' Group in early 2014 enabled discussions and the spread of best practice management amongst the different organisations involved in habitat work in the North Chilterns Chalk Living Landscape.

Highlights

Nature reserves

The Wildlife Trust manages 126 nature reserves covering 3,945 hectares (approx. 9,748 acres). The Trust's estate is managed by three county-based teams with 24 staff in total, with crucial support from volunteers including voluntary wardens. Without them, our capacity to deliver work would be much diminished.

- Around five acres of woodland was coppiced across 11 woodlands in Cambridgeshire, with the majority at Brampton Wood, Gamlingay Wood and Hayley Wood. The creation and maintenance of these important habitats are important for silver-washed fritillary, dark green fritillary and purple emperor butterflies.
- Management of scrub habitat for nightingale was completed at Grafham Water and a number of other reserves. This, in conjunction with annual monitoring of nightingales at Grafham Water by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO), is now being used as an example of good conservation management practice in a published BTO guidance booklet.

- As part of the Coronation Meadows project, seed was hand-collected from Upwood Meadows and Chettisham Meadows in late summer, and sown in late autumn to create new meadows. Subsequent surveys at Upwood Meadows receptor site, Helen's Close, have confirmed that at least 10 seeded species not formerly recorded have established including great burnet, devil's-bit scabious and sulphur clover. In Northamptonshire seed harvested from our donor site, Boddington Meadows, was spread at Kingsthorpe North Meadows, on the edge of Northampton.
- Work to tackle the invasive species Himalayan balsam, at Flitwick Moor and upstream of the reserve, has brought about a marked reduction since the project started (funded by Natural England and the Environment Agency).
- At Cooper's Hill heather seed has been collected from the reserve to take to the nearby Center Parcs site, to help increase the amount of heathland in the Greensand Ridge Living Landscape.
- Major restoration work has been carried out at Irthlingborough Lakes and Meadows including re-connecting two lakes to prevent flooding, clearing and creating an island and a wetland scrape.

- During the winter work began at Kester's Docking in the Great Fen to create a mix of habitats including reedbed, seasonal pools and wet and dry grassland covering 140 hectares.
- Conservation grazing continues to play a key role in the Trust's management of its nature reserves. This year 22 nature reserves were grazed or partially grazed by the Trust's own livestock, and more than 30 more were grazed or jointly grazed by other graziers' livestock.

▼ Sheep grazing at Pegsdon in Bedfordshire.



Image: by Cathy Wainwright

Wider countryside

We believe that 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.

- Local Wildlife Sites (also known as County Wildlife Sites) form a crucial part of our ecological network. In March 2015 there were 1,653 designated Local Wildlife Sites across our three counties. The protection of these sites is the most important conservation work we undertake beyond managing our nature reserves. We survey sites, engage with owners and seek to get sites into positive management. At the end of last year 52% of sites were judged to be in positive management (51% in 2013-14) with almost 120 sites surveyed across the three counties.
- We play a lead role in the three Local Nature Partnerships (LNPs) in Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire. These partnerships work strategically to deliver nature protection objectives and have strong working relationship with the Local Enterprise Partnerships.

- We carried out seed harvesting and sowing, and green hay spreading, as part of a trial at Steeple Morden Quarry, to determine the most effective means to restore chalk grassland at this site owned by Omya UK. The Trust will monitor the establishment of chalk grassland species there over the next five years.
- The Northamptonshire Biodiversity Records Centre received funds to help digitise historical beetle, butterfly and church survey data and 280,000 bird records dating back to the 1950s.
- Arqiva, corporate members of the Wildlife Trust, agreed to continue supporting our Local Wildlife Sites programme in Bedfordshire including carrying out annual botanical surveys to monitor change.
- Non-native invasive species, including Himalayan balsam and giant hogweed, have been controlled along the whole length of the Bourn Brook, through the Bourn Free project sponsored by Defra.

Heather seed harvesting at Cooper's Hill ►



Image: by Gwen Hitchcock

Highlights

Education and community

We engage with local communities in a variety of ways to grow support for nature conservation and get people actively involved in wildlife.

- The education and community team engaged with 19,536 people during 2014-15. This is a slight decrease on the 2013-14 figures of 19,822. The number of people engaged in community activities continues to increase year on year in line with the Trust's aspirations (7,931 in 2014/15 compared to 7,430 in the previous year).

- ▼ Volunteers hedgelaying at Galley and Warden Hills



Image: by Esther Clarke

- The number of Wildlife Watch groups has decreased this year to 20 (24 groups in 2013-14) but the number of children attending has increased to 1,576 (1,461 in 2013-14). Cambourne Wildlife Watch group was awarded Best New Group in the national Wildlife Watch Group of the Year competition.
- Drop-in family activities continue to be popular at Paxton Pits with 860 people taking part during the school holidays.
- At Irthingborough Lakes and Meadows in the Nene Valley we ran a programme of wildlife-themed events attended by more than 400 people and an interactive map of the Nene Valley is now available on the website.
- A dog training event took place on Blows' Downs, funded by Central Bedfordshire Council. The event included positive messages about how dog walkers can support Wildlife Trust activities and limit their pet's impact on the site.
- Community engagement activities in Cambridge included helping residents of the new development at Orchard Park to identify wildlife and make the area more wildlife-friendly.

▼ Irthingborough Lakes and Meadows



Image: by John Abbott

- We helped several local community groups and schools in Peterborough survey and manage their local greenspaces through the GoWild! Programme funded by Caterpillar Perkins.
- A new Local Group was launched in South Bedfordshire and is already engaging hundreds of local people. We have 14 Local Groups who raise awareness about and funds for the Wildlife Trust (£16,149 in 2014-15).
- The Great Fen Local Group established the Rothschild Way long distance walking route - 39 miles from the National Trust's Wicken Fen to Woodwalton Fen. A group of 12 staff and volunteers took part in an inaugural walk on 28th June 2014 which raised more than £1,700 in sponsorship for the Trust.
- We delivered 520 places on 41 Wildlife Training Workshops.



Image: Nancy Reed by Matthew Roberts

**The Trust employed 91 staff (full-time equivalent).
The Trust recognises the enormous value of volunteers who number in excess of 1,300 – more than 13 for each member of staff.
No employees earn more than £60,000.**

Godmanchester nature reserve

Thank you to all those individuals and companies who helped us to purchase and restore this wonderful nature reserve at the heart of our Ouse Valley Living Landscape. Habitat improvement works to hedges and grasslands were carried out at the reserve, as well as providing improved access through the creation of circular paths, replacement of stiles with kissing gates and installing new gates to provide increased access for visitors.

In June and July 2014 Cambridgeshire County Council carried out consultation on its Long-term Transport Strategy. Included in the post-2021 schemes was a proposal for a link road from Hartford to the A14 junction at Godmanchester to improve access to a possible future development at RAF Wyton. The indicative route shown for this road was through either the Wildlife Trust's Godmanchester nature reserve at Cow Lane or through a Site of Special Scientific Interest - Godmanchester Eastside Common.

We strongly opposed this road plan as - whichever route was chosen - the impact on local wildlife and environment would be unacceptable. We launched a media, community and online campaign against the road proposal including a petition which was signed by nearly 1,400 people and was officially lodged with the council. In November 2014 the County Council announced that the road proposal was removed from the Long-term Transport Strategy. The Wildlife Trust-led Road to Ruin campaign was explicitly mentioned in the withdrawal.



Image: by Guy Pilkington

A wonderful year for wildlife

This year has been packed with wildlife highlights from our nature reserves and beyond.

At Totternhoe in Bedfordshire, more than 100 glow-worms were discovered in a single night and scarlet tiger moths were recorded for the first time at Flitwick Moor, having only recently colonised Bedfordshire.

Also in Bedfordshire, dingy skipper butterflies bred at Old Warden Tunnel for the second year running and more than 6,000 chalkhill blues were seen at Houghton Regis chalk pits.

At Old Sulehay a rare white pyramidal orchid was discovered on Sammock's Hill and the first southern marsh orchid was also recorded at the reserve. Four dark green fritillary butterflies were recorded here for the first time.



Image: Southern marsh orchid by Vicky Nall

In Cambourne record numbers of noctule bats emerged from the maternity roost in Oaks Wood and lake monitoring in the village has shown good numbers of snipe and jack snipe and also one breeding pair of rare black-necked grebe.

Rare water beetles *Dytiscus circumflexus* and *Hygrotus (Coelambus) nigrolineatus* were recorded for the first time at Summer Leys, and at Twywell Hills and Dales numbers of grizzled skipper butterflies were up 130% and there was a five-fold increase in small skippers. Irthlingborough Lakes and Meadows shows a marked increase in species diversity as a direct result of the positive management the Trust has implemented.

We have had our most successful dormouse monitoring season at Brampton Wood for seven years with dormice being found across significant parts of the wood. Elsewhere in Cambridgeshire there were increased signs of water voles on various water courses in Cambridge and on the Bourn Brook, where the density of Himalayan balsam was also beginning to reduce thanks to control by local volunteers organised by the Trust. A new population of white-clawed crayfish was also discovered on the Orwell stream.



Image: by Buglife

▲ The rare tansy beetle was spotted at Woodwalton Fen.

And in the Great Fen the nationally scarce tansy beetle was rediscovered at Woodwalton Fen. Otherwise, it has been confined to the River Ouse floodplain near York for several decades. The population is being monitored by Buglife and the University of York. It has also been an excellent year for raptors with rough-legged buzzard and short-eared owls seen this winter.

Across the three counties there were also record numbers of polecat sightings. Unfortunately this shy mammal is most often seen as roadkill.



Image: by Elliott Smith

Polecat ►

Financial review

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.

Of the total income in 2015, more than half (£2.92 million) was unrestricted, with £2.2 million being restricted.

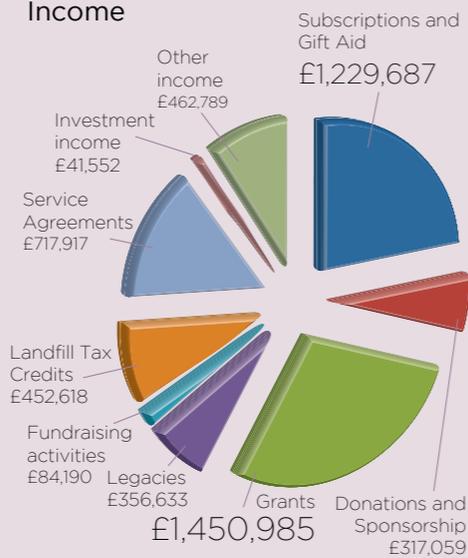
The Trust achieved an unrestricted surplus of £60,445 (2014 £199,173) with a restricted surplus of £264,476 (2014 £1,800,555) resulting in total net assets of £20.4 million (£17.5 million attributable to restricted activities).

Within the restricted funds, the land holdings in the Great Fen and certain other reserves are included, together with substantial cash balances held by us against future liabilities for managing specific nature reserves over long periods.

The unrestricted surplus represents funds received but not yet expended, and is carried forward in accordance with our financial reserves policy, described below, in order to give a degree of stability during our day-to-day charitable work and enable planning for efficient application of our scarce resources.

As some of our income sources are vulnerable, and unpredictable in terms of amount and timing, the Trustees have agreed a policy of maintaining a financial reserve that would cover at least three months' expenditure on running costs but aiming for six months' cover. At the year end, the unrestricted current assets provided four months' cover. The management and staff of the Trust continue to control costs and save resources

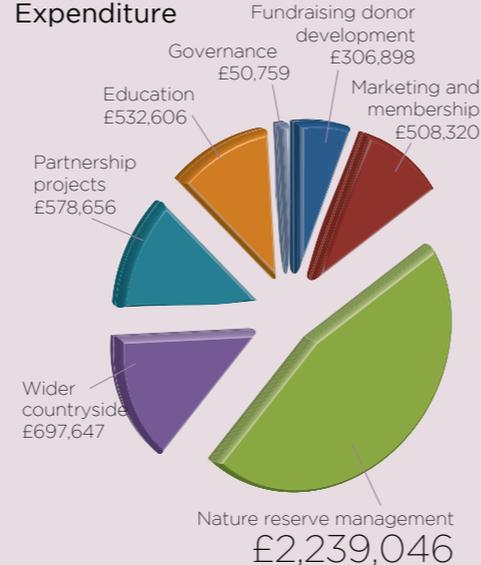
Income



wherever possible, but if we are to continue to realise our ambitions for local wildlife, we need to boost significantly the unrestricted income of the Trust on a sustainable basis so we can optimise our efficiency and extend our work to achieve a positive impact for local wildlife. This requirement is currently being considered as part of our five-year planning process.

Karen Silcock, Treasurer

Expenditure



What you told us...

“The staff were brilliant, they got the balance just right between safety and adventure. The boys absorbed the informal education in a way that they never would at school, they were really stimulated by the whole experience.”

- A teacher, following a visit to the Nene Valley.

“The bird watching was my favourite, I loved watching the cormorants. I am not a fan of nature but that has changed because of coming today.”

- A child attending an event at Paxton Pits.

“The guided walk was a real success – many asked if we could go round again. The knowledge and fun the staff gave to the talk was fantastic and they made it really interactive.”

- An attendee at an event in the Great Fen.



Event at Cherry Hinton Chalk Pits. Image: by Chris Loades

Contributors and supporters

Enduring and improving relationships have been, and will continue to be, important factors in the Trust's success. Without the support and co-operation of a huge number of people, we would have achieved little during the year. The support of members, corporate members, sponsors, charitable trusts, government organisations at all levels and our professional advisers has been vital, as has the remarkably dedicated work of our volunteers and staff.

Funding to manage our nature reserves comes from diverse sources including members' subscriptions, Heritage Lottery Fund, Landfill Communities Fund (via SITA Trust, Biffa Award and Veolia Environmental Trust), Natural England, Environment Agency, grant-making trusts, local authorities and our 73 corporate members and supporters.

The financial and time contributions from supporters are the lifeblood of the Trust and it is largely their generosity that has enabled us to undertake much of the Trust's essential conservation work during the year. Increasing the supporter base and membership will continue to be a key priority as this will have a direct effect on our capacity to do more for nature conservation in the next year and secure a longer term impact on the natural environment.

At March 2015 we had 36,376 members, a net increase of 1.8% on March 2014. This provided £942,427 income and £244,716 Gift Aid. Great efforts were made to retain existing supporters and at the year end the annual retention rate of members was 89.3%. Corporate membership subscriptions provided £42,544 showing an 8% increase. Our thanks to all the people who left us legacies. We are always very grateful when someone remembers us in their will. We were the grateful beneficiaries of a significant legacy this year, over £268,000 was left to us in the will of Miss Margaret Vince. Legacies have made a substantial contribution to the work of the Trust in recent years. This year we received legacies from: Derek Kennedy, George Thomas Woods, John Richardson, Mrs B Booth, Dr Clara Zihali and John M Taylor.

As at March 2015 our corporate members were:

PLATINUM

The Biodiversity Consultancy

GOLD

Hewitsons, Prologis UK Ltd, UK Power Networks

SILVER

Anglian Water Ltd, Arqiva Ltd, AT Cross 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, 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, Highgate House, Hutchings & Harding, JB Shropshire and Sons, Lockhart Garrett Ltd, Moulton College, Mott MacDonald Ltd, OuterSpace Gardens, Perkins Group Ltd, Q Hotels Hellidon Lakes, Rapid Employment, Richard Buxton Environmental & Public Law, Rotary Club of St Neots St Marys, RPS Group, RWE npower (Little Barford Power Station), Spendlove Contracting, The Jordans & Ryvita Company Ltd, The Marshall Group of Companies, The Wellcome Trust, Vine House Farm, Weetabix, Willowbrook, Whittlebury Park LLP

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

Augean Community Fund
Banister Charitable Trust
Barbara Price Charitable Trust
Bedford Borough Council
Bedfordshire Rural Community Charity
Berry Brothers
BGL Group
BIFFA Award
Bruce Wake Charitable Trust
Cambridge Chrysalis Trust
Caterpillar Perkins
Clark Bradbury Charitable Trust
Center Parcs
Defra

Douglas Compton James Charitable Trust
Environment Agency
Esmée Fairburn Foundation
Godmanchester Town Council
Grosvenor (TMLC)
Heritage Lottery Foundation
Jack Patston Charitable Trust
Lafarge Tarmac
Luton Borough Council
LXB RP (Rushden)
Montague Thompson-Coon Charitable Trust
MS Staples Charitable Trust
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Wadlow Energy Ltd
Weston Power Distribution
Wildlife Travel
William Haddon Charitable Trust
Wixamtree Charitable Trust
WREN

Image: Pyramidal orchids by Rebecca Pitman



Trust information

Image: by Margaret Holland



▲ Snipe had a good year at Cambourne nature reserve

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