

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

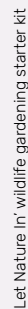


Marine Protected Areas Community Engagement

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.

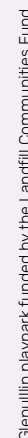
Starting in early spring 2024, we organised a programme of outreach events to foster community engagement and inspire action. These events included rockpool rambles, beach cleans, educational workshops and participation in various coastal festivals. In March 2024, we brought together partner organisations 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.



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

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.



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.

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

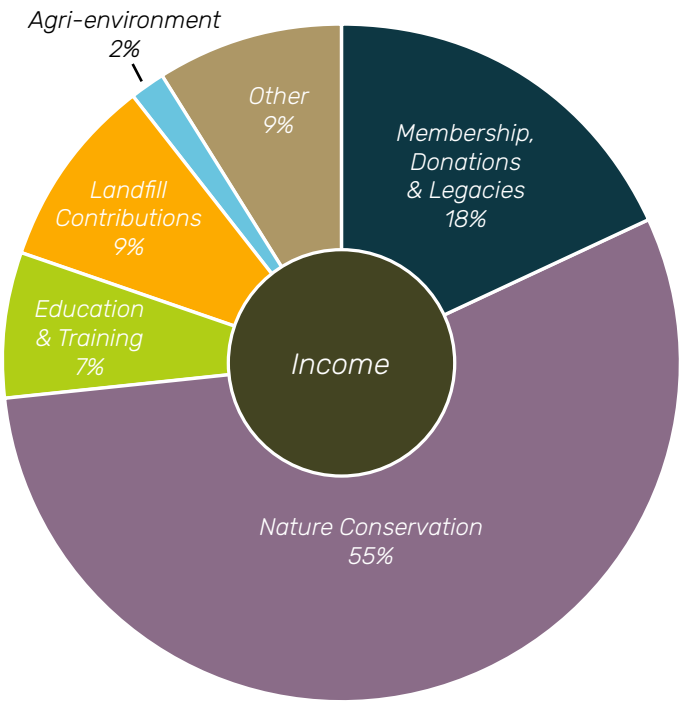
Unrestricted income is revenue generated by the charity for its general purposes. It can be used at the discretion of the charity on any of the charity’s objects and a substantial component is donations from our members and supporters.

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.

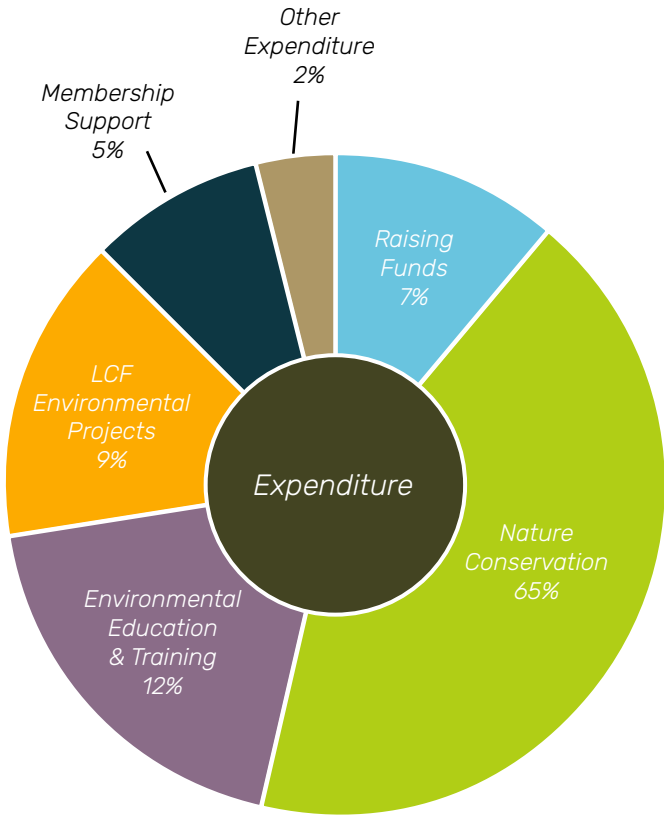
The surplus is in keeping with the charity’s objectives which are to deliver conservation outcomes rather than a surplus of income over expenditure. A modest surplus is, however, necessary in order to maintain financial stability and help to secure the long-term viability of the charity.

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



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.

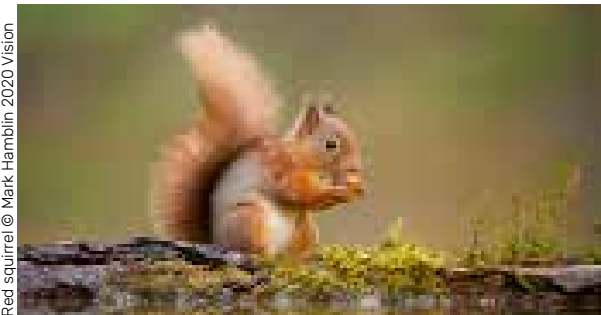
Cost of living crisis and inflationary increases were actively managed during the year. A membership growth plan and associated staffing structure has been put into place in an effort to return to membership growth over the coming years.

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

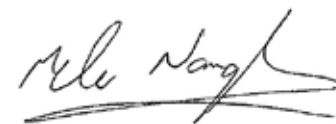
from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.

- 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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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.