



**Ulster  
Wildlife**

# Our Year for Nature, People and Climate

**Ulster Wildlife Trust**

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**Annual Report &  
Accounts 24-25**



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Common thrift © Simon Gray



Cryptic Wood White © Katy Bell

# Foreword

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



John Witchell  
*Chair of Ulster Wildlife*

# Highlights of our year for wildlife



## April 24

### Recognition for Investing in Volunteers

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



## May 24

### First water stick insect discovered in Northern Ireland

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



## June 24

### Farmer celebrates six years of helping barn owls

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



## July 24

### Expansion of Balloo Wetland to benefit biodiversity

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



## August 24

### Fermanagh's flower-rich grasslands rediscovered and protected

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



## September 24

### New breeding site discovered for marsh fritillary butterfly

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

# Highlights of our year for wildlife



## October 24

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

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



## November 24

Peatland restoration training upsills local contractors

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



## December 24

Nest and Nooks Appeal launched

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



## January 25

Winter talks programme launched

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



## February 25

Marine Conference makes waves for a sustainable future

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



## March 25

Native oysters return to Carrickfergus

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



# Bringing nature back

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

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

## Public Benefit

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

## Our Vision

A wilder future where people and nature are thriving together

## Our Purpose

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

## Our Strategic Outcomes for 2030

<p><b>1. NATURE</b> - Nature is in recovery and wildlife is thriving across Northern Ireland.</p>	<p><b>2. PEOPLE</b> - More people are taking positive action for nature and climate and are benefitting from time spent in nature.</p>	<p><b>3. CLIMATE</b> - Nature-based solutions are playing a central role in addressing climate change.</p>
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# Outcome 1 Nature

## Nature is in recovery and wildlife is thriving across Northern Ireland

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



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

**550** farmers and landowners received advice

**221** Surveyed woodlands for red squirrels and pine martens

**15** barn owl nest-boxes erected in key locations

**180** species identified on and surrounding the native oyster nurseries



Barn owl box installation

## Barn Owls

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

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

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

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

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



Red Squirrel at Mount Stewart © Katy Bell

## Red Squirrels

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

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

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

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



Hedgehogs © Jon Hawkins Surrey Hills Photography

## Hedgehogs

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

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

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

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



Puffin © Ronald Surgenor

## Nature Reserves

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

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

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

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

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

## Nature Recovery Networks

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

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

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

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



Nature Recovery Networks 30by30 workshop



Small eggar caterpillars

## Partnership Sites

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

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

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

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

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



Showing the beauty of farms to artists through the Leitrim Sustainable Agriculture Group

# Environmental Farming Scheme

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

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

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

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

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

# Public Affairs, Policy and Legislation

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

# Farming with nature: creating a haven for barn owls

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

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

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

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

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



Adam and Jack Kelly with Katy Bell



## Outcome 2 People

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

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

Corporate volunteers at Slieve Donard Nature Reserve

**135** active volunteers

**8,635** volunteer hours given to nature

**13,669** members

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

**21** Youth Forum members

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



## Wild Youth

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

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

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

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

Wildlife Watch leaders and children at Sliavenacloy Nature Reserve



## Wildlife Watch Groups

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

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

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

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

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

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



## Youth Forum

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

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

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

Bog Meadows garden volunteers and partners



## Bog Meadows – Our People, Our Places

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

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

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

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

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

Blue Horizons Conference at W5



## Marine Protected Areas Community Engagement

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

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

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

ALB volunteers at Bog Meadows Nature Reserve



## Volunteering

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

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

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

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

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

Young people who took part in the Binevenagh Youth Residential



## Binevenagh Youth Residential

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

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

Derryvullan Old church Ruins funded by the Landfill Communities Fund



## Landfill Communities Fund

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

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

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

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



## Exclusive Member Events

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

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

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

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



The Meadow Ladies butterfly survey group

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

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

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

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

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



**Patricia McDonnell**  
Founder of The Meadow Ladies



## Outcome 3 Climate

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

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

**130** hectares of peatland restored

**125** hectares of invasive species controlled

**3800** hectares of peatland surveyed

**17.25** km of shore surveyed for wild native oysters

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



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

# Restoring peatlands for nature and climate

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

# Restoring blue carbon habitats and species

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Our fourth new oyster nursery at Carrickfergus



Native oysters (*Ostrea edulis*)



Chris helping to monitor native oysters at our nurseries

# Diving into marine conservation – Chris Hamill’s journey

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



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

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

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

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

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



**Chris Hamill**  
Marine Team  
Placement Student



Common frog © Simon Gray

# Thank you for Bringing Nature Back

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

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

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

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

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



Members' Day guided walk

## Members

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

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



Ancient oak at Glenarm Nature Reserve

## Gifts In Wills & In-Memory

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

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



Black guillemot © Katy Bell

## Funders

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

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

Thank you to our supporters



Irish stoat © Ronald Surgenor

Power NI volunteers clearing ragwort at Slievenacloy Nature Reserve



Front cover of our 2025 charity calendar



## Businesses

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

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

## Fundraising & Donations

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

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



## Plans for the Future

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

Forester moth © Simon Gray

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

# Financial Review at 31 March 2025

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

## Sources of Income

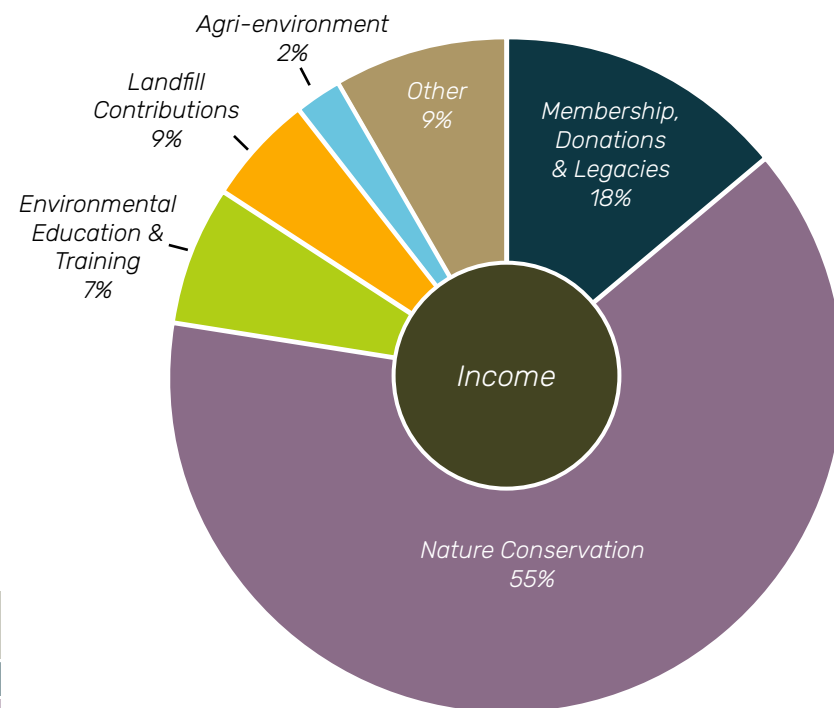
Unrestricted income is revenue generated by the charity for its general purposes. It can be used at the discretion of the charity on any of the charity’s objects and a substantial component is donations from our members and supporters.

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

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

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

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



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

# Financial Review at 31 March 2025

## How the Charity Spent its Resources

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

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

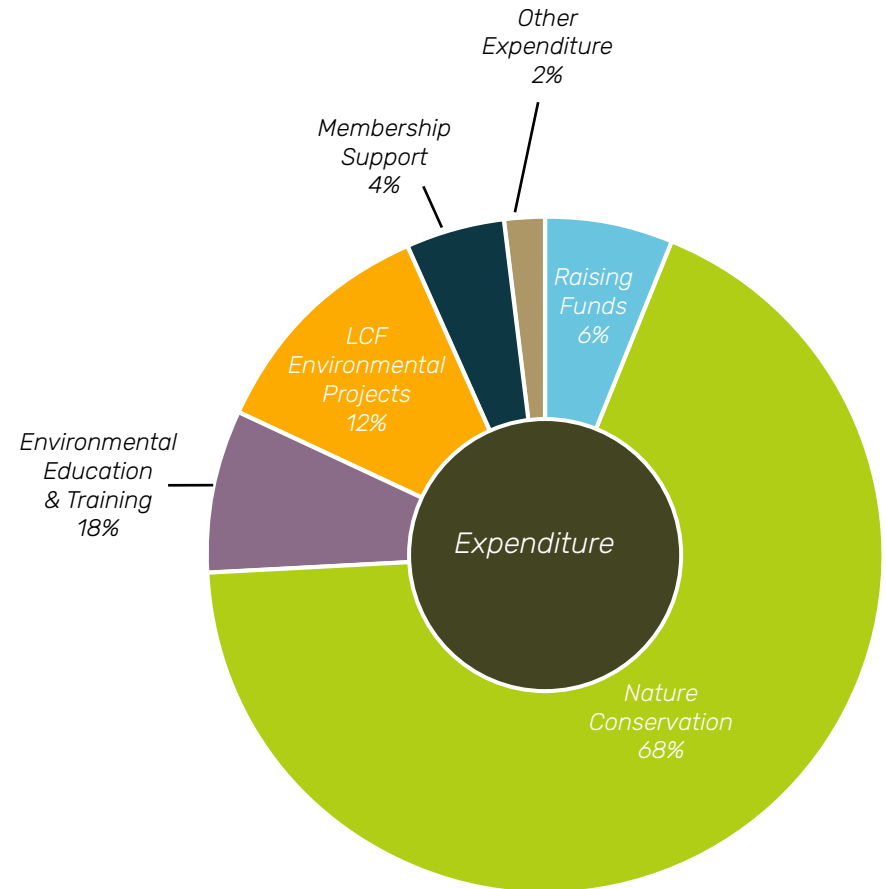
Restricted projects make a contribution to core overhead costs for time and expenses incurred in running the projects.

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

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

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

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



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

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

# Structure, Governance & Management

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

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

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

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

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

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



© Ronald Surgenor



Black Guillemot © Katy Bell



© Simon Gray

# Changes to the Council during 2024/2025

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

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

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

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

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

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

# Statement of Trustees' Responsibilities

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

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

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

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

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

## Provision of Information to Auditors

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

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

## Auditor

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

John Wittchell  
Chairman

David Hendron  
Honorary Treasurer

# Articles of Association

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



# Key Policies & Processes

## Managing Risk

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

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

Processes include:

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

The most significant risks identified in 2024/25 were:

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

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

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

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

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

The most significant risks identified for 2025/26 are:

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



Red squirrel © Simon Gray

## Equal Opportunities and Diversity

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

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

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

## Sustainability

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

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

## Wider network

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

## Financial Management

### Financial Reserves Policy

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

These risks include, amongst others:

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

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

### Designated Funds

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

### Monitoring and Reviewing

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

## Our Promise to Our Supporters

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

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

### Our Fundraising Promise



We are committed to high standards.

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

We are honest and open.

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

We are respectful.

- We respect the rights, dignities and privacy of our supporters and beneficiaries.
- We will not put undue pressure on anyone to make a gift, and if a person does not want to give or wishes to cease giving, we will respect that decision.
- If someone tells us that they don't want us to contact them in a particular way, we will not do so - our Privacy Notice for Members and Supporters is available on our website at [ulsterwildlife.org/privacy-notice](http://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](mailto:complaints@ulsterwildlife.org). For further information, read our complaints policy.
- If we cannot resolve a complaint, we accept the authority of the Fundraising Regulator to make a final adjudication.



Storm petrel © Ronald Surgenor

# Advisors, Senior Personnel and Administrative Details

## Auditors

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

## Bankers

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

## Solicitors

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

## Company Secretary

Catherine Thompson

## Senior Leadership Team

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

## Charity Registration Number

NIC 101848

## Company Registration Number

NI12711

## Registered Office and Operational Address

McClelland House  
10 Heron Road  
Belfast  
BT3 9LE

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

## Opinion

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

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

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

## Basis for opinion

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

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

## Conclusions relating to going concern

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

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

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

## Other information

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

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

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

## Opinion on other matter prescribed by the Companies Act 2006

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

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

## Matters on which we are required to report by exception

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

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

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

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

## Responsibilities of trustees for the financial statements

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

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

## Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- Agreeing financial statement disclosures to underlying supporting documentation;

# 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](http://www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities). This description forms part of our auditor's report.

## Further information regarding the scope of our responsibilities as auditor

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

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

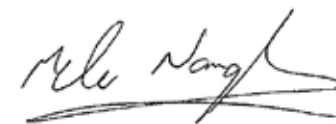
from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.

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

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

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

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



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

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

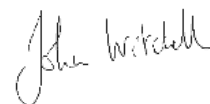
	Notes	Unrestricted Fund £	Restricted Fund £	2025 Total Funds £	2024 Total Funds £
<b>INCOME FROM:</b>					
Donations & Legacies	3	475,847	49,572	525,419	595,265
Conservation Activities	4	249,813	2,129,497	2,379,310	1,793,700
Agri-environment Payments		49,165	39,705	88,870	53,221
Charitable Activities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

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

## Statement of Financial Position at 31 March 2025

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

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



John Witchell, Chair



David Menon, Honorary Treasurer

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

## Statement of Cash Flows for year ending 31 March 2025

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

## Notes to the accounts

### 1 Statement of Compliance

These financial statements have been prepared in compliance with FRS102, 'The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and the Republic of Ireland', the Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (Charities SORP (FRS102)) and the Charities Act 2008.

### 2 Accounting Policies

#### Basis of preparation

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

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

#### Going concern

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

#### Fund accounting

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

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

#### Incoming resources

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

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

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

#### Resources expended

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

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

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

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

#### Depreciation

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

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

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

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

#### Grants

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

#### Foreign currency

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

#### Pensions

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

#### Taxation

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

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

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

## Notes to the accounts

### 3 Donations & Legacies

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

### 4 Conservation Grants

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

### 5 Landfill Environmental Projects

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

## Notes to the accounts

### 6 Education & Training Grants

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

### 7 Interest Received

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

### 8 Other Income

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

### 9 Expenditure on Raising Donations & Legacies

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

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

## Notes to the accounts

### 10 Charitable Activities

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

### 11 Expenditure on Charitable Activities

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

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

## Notes to the accounts

### 12 Depreciation

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

### 13 Staff Costs

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

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

The key management personnel comprise the trustees and the members of the senior management team. The total employee benefits of the key management personnel was £171,149. (2024: £202,497).

### 14 Transfer Between Funds

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

### 15 Board Remuneration and Related Party Transactions

No members of the Board received any remuneration during the year in their capacity as Trustees. No travel and subsistence costs were paid on behalf of trustees during the year. (2024 £NIL). No travel and subsistence costs were paid to trustees during the year. (2024 £NIL). No trustees received payment for professional services supplied to the charity (2024 £NIL). No balances are owed to trustees at 31st March 2025.

## Notes to the accounts

### 16 Fixed Assets

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

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

### 17 Debtors

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

### 18 Creditors Falling Due Within One Year

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

### 19 Creditors Falling Due After More Than One Year

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

## Notes to the accounts

### 20 Movement on Unrestricted Funds

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

### 21 Movement on Designated Fund for the Future

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

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

### 22 Movement on Fund for the Future

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

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

### 23 Contingent Liability

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

### 24 Taxation

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

### 25 Company Status

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



Badger © Ronald Surgenor



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

Join now and together we can make a real difference  
[www.ulsterwildlife.org/join](http://www.ulsterwildlife.org/join)

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## 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.