

Join the movement for wetlands

Impact Report 2022/23



Our vision

A world in which healthy wetland nature thrives and enriches lives.

Our mission

We conserve, restore, and create wetlands, save wetland wildlife, and inspire everyone to value the amazing things healthy wetlands achieve for people and nature.



During 2022 and 2023 we have made incredible strides on many fronts. From conservation to biodiversity and species restoration, outreach education and community empowerment – the work we have done puts us in a very strong position for the year ahead.

It will be a critical year for us for two reasons. We will continue to further our influence and continue spreading the message of the vital role wetlands play in a healthy, sustainable, thriving modern world. We will also publish our new strategic plan for 2024-30, which will build on our existing work and set out ambitious goals for the future.

But we can't do anything without you by our side. Read on to discover the incredible feats of conservation and restoration we have achieved with your help, and where our journey together could take us.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sarah'.

Sarah Fowler

WWT Chief Executive





**We work with landowners
and support farmers to
restore farmland ponds and
watercourses, which are vital
places for wetland nature**

Our ambitions

Our four ongoing ambitions, set in 2020, shape and focus our priorities. Achieving these ambitions will have vast benefits for wetlands and wetland nature, and put wetlands centre stage in tackling global challenges such as climate breakdown and collapsing nature.

Ambition one:

Growing

For the UK to have a bigger, better and more connected network of wetlands with over 100,000ha of new and restored wetland habitats, and for the health of existing wetlands to be improving. This network will sustain healthy wetland nature and provide nature-based solutions to urgent challenges such as the climate emergency.

Ambition two:

Inspiring

For the majority of people in the UK to value and be significantly more connected to wetlands, with at least one million people directly taking action for wetlands where they live and work.

Ambition three:

Empowering

In the countries in which we work, where wetlands, wetland nature and peoples' livelihoods are threatened, to deliver community-led and sustainable solutions, and for wetlands to be more effectively valued and considered in local, regional and national decision-making.

Ambition four:

Influencing

For key international decision makers to value wetlands. To build a global community of highly skilled individuals creating and managing wetlands and mobilising wetland support.

This report summarises some of our key projects and their impact in 2022/23. But they are just part of a much wider range of activities which are delivered by our staff and volunteers around the world. Please visit our website or annual report for more information.

[Read more](#)

Our ambitions in action

Whether it's delivering locally-led conservation work or wetland habitats at scale, our ambitions drive us to work tirelessly, from the frontlines of conservation out in the field to the global stage, meeting challenges facing wetland conservation all over the world.



Nature-based solutions

making use of wetlands as natural filters to alleviate pollution to our waterways



Creating connections

bringing the relevance and wonders of wetland nature to life by connecting more people to wetlands



Urgent climate action

restoring nature-rich, carbon-capturing saltmarsh



Restoring habitats

creating bigger, better, more connected wetlands around the world



Increasing access to nature

creating healthy blue cities to level up access to nature in urban areas



Putting
wetlands
centre-stage



Empowering communities

building capability among local communities to restore and protect their wetlands, passing that passion up the national decision-making chain



Wetlands for extreme weather protection

delivering community resilience through wetlands' natural capacity to mitigate flood and drought damage



Inspiring action

encouraging people to act to improve wetlands where they live and work



Helping nature thrive


restoring biodiversity through species and habitat restoration and protection projects around the world

Restoration at scale

As landscape-scale conservation continues to receive greater attention as a way forward for managing our natural habitats, WWT has stepped into a leading role in reinstating healthy and natural wetlands in the UK and abroad.

WWT is responsible for creating, restoring and managing over 6,000ha of some of the UK's most important wetlands. Many of which are designated as being of national and international importance, and a key supporter of biodiversity in our landscape. But there is much more we need to do.

Over the past year, we have been building a better, healthier, more connected and wildlife-rich wetland landscape around the world. We have restored farmland ponds and floodplain meadows, protected and created carbon-rich saltmarsh and supported pioneering sustainable agriculture.

An aerial photograph of a restored wetland landscape. A winding stream flows through a green and brown field, leading to a large, dark pond. The surrounding area is a mix of grassy fields and bare trees, suggesting a natural, undisturbed environment.

Restoring and managing over 6,000ha of some of the UK's most important wetlands.

Restoration in action

Delivering Flourishing Floodplains

We have brought life flooding back to the Severn and Avon Vales with our ground-breaking landscape-scale project Flourishing Floodplains. This has been funded by the Government's Green Recovery Challenge Fund and delivered as a partnership between WWT, the Floodplain Meadows Partnership at the Open University and Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group South West. The project has been busy restoring habitats, conducting research to support endangered species such as European eel and Eurasian curlew, and creating local advocates with skills and knowledge to help protect the biodiversity of these vital wetlands.

Working together with farmers and landowners across seven sites, we have completely restored 36ha of floodplain meadow habitat, sourcing species-rich meadow seeds direct from local ancient floodplain 'donor' meadows. The project has been a major win for biodiversity in the region, with improvements to water quality due to the natural filtration wetlands provide giving local wildlife a much-needed boost.

[Read more](#)

36ha

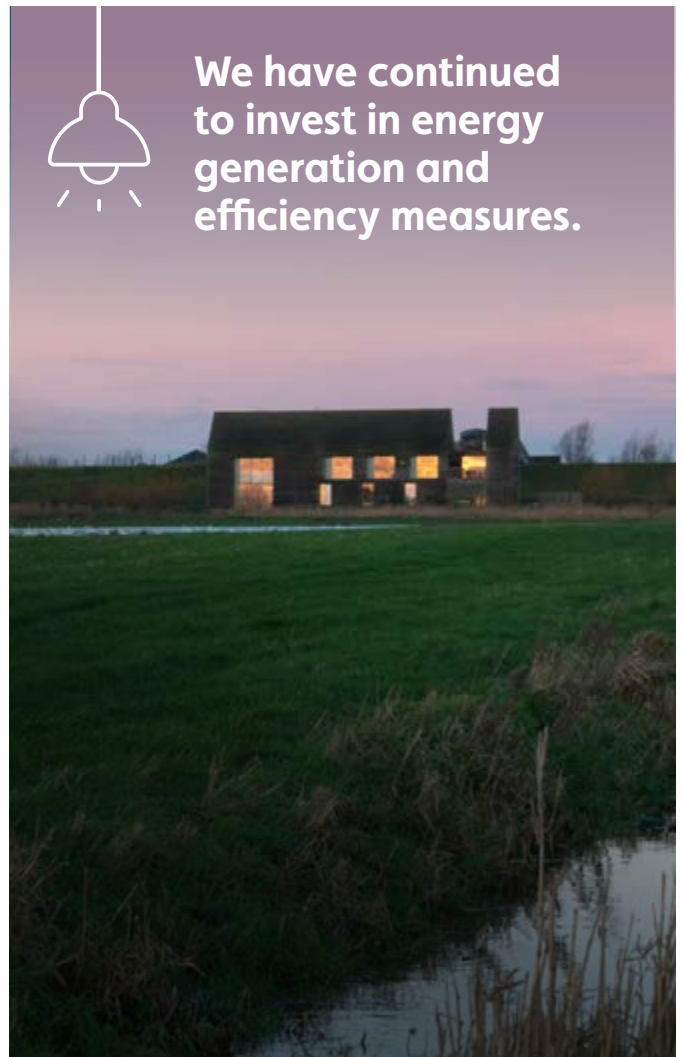
of completely restored floodplain meadow habitat.



Expanding our reach for the climate

Restoring saltmarsh and other coastal wetlands has great potential as a tool to fight climate change as they hold bigger carbon stocks than forests per unit area. With the additional lease of 2,600ha of land at the mouth of the River Parrett and Brue, we have close to doubled the total area of land we are managing in the Bridgwater Bay area, including the largest area of saltmarsh in Somerset – an incredibly powerful carbon sink.

Across our sites we generate around 300,000kWh of electricity a year from over 910 solar panels.



We have continued to invest in energy generation and efficiency measures.

We have created four community resource-management associations, which took over formal management of Lake Tseny in October 2022.



Building a sustainable future in Madagascar

Wetlands support a disproportionate amount of global biodiversity, but are often under threat from unsustainable development. WWT is focused on finding opportunities to make a substantial and lasting difference to peoples' lives in impacted regions.

In Madagascar, our work has taken us to two major waterscapes around Lake Sofia and Lake Tseny. Here we are reducing sedimentation run-off into the lakes, improving food security and supporting sustainable agriculture. At Lake Tseny, with our main partner Madagasikara Voakajy (Mavoia) we have created four community resource-management associations. These took over formal management of the wetland around Lake Tseny in October 2022 for an initial three years. If the community can prove it can successfully manage them, this will be extended for a further ten years.

[Read more](#)

On the front lines of wetland species conservation

We've seen some remarkable successes over the last 75 years, such as helping to bring the nene, also known as the Hawaiian goose, back from the brink of extinction. From the common crane to the black-tailed godwit, our species and wetland restoration projects ensure these precious wetland residents can thrive. Our work ensures we keep adding to the ranks of over 150,000 waterbirds that migrate to visit our 10 UK sites every winter.

We are world leaders in conservation breeding

Site breeding species in numbers

As well as key species restoration projects, the work we do to maintain wetland habitats across our ten sites supports numerous wetland species to thrive. Here is a window on some of the impacts our reserve work has had on breeding numbers this year.



WWT Welney

100%

black-tailed godwit
egg-to-fledgling
headstarting success rate



WWT Llanelli

19 pairs

of nesting lapwings after
extensive clearance work



WWT Caerlaverock

65

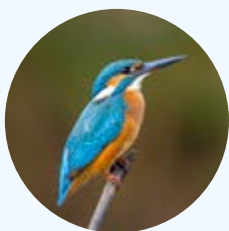
tree sparrows, a red listed
bird of conservation concern,
fledged from the first year
of a nest box project set up
on the reserve



WWT Martin Mere

50 pairs

of UK amber-listed reed
buntings bred due to
extensive maintenance of
reedbeds and scrub



WWT Slimbridge

2 pairs

of kingfishers nesting
on an artificial bank created
in the 1990s

150k+

migratory waterbirds
visit our 10 UK sites
every winter.

Breeding brighter futures

Restoring curlew populations

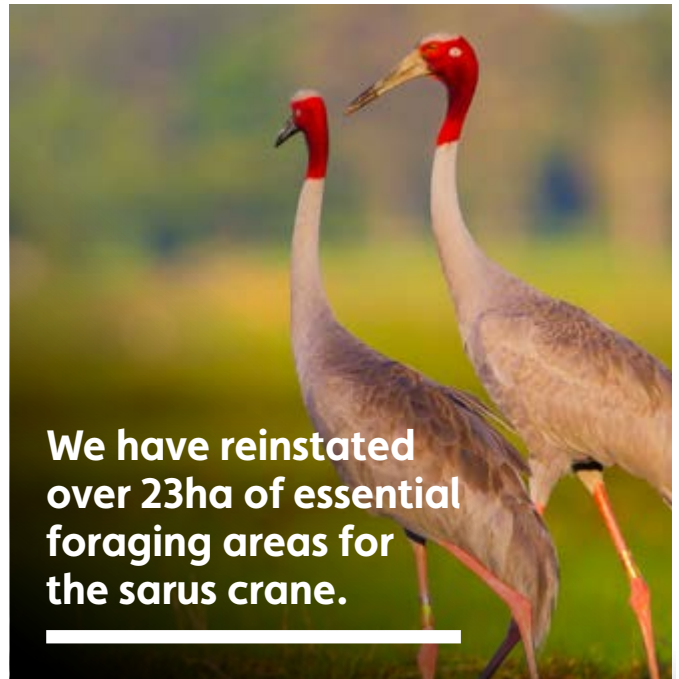
The UK is home to a quarter of the world's Eurasian curlew population. But our changing landscapes are increasingly inhospitable to chick rearing and egg hatching, and the number of breeding birds has dropped by about 65% since 1970.

In summer 2022, working with Dartmoor National Park Authority, Natural England, the RSPB, the Duchy of Cornwall, and the Prince of Wales's Charitable Foundation, we successfully released 27 birds head-started from eggs rescued from MOD airfields. They join the 33 birds released in 2021. We hope they will form the nucleus of a restored population in their former haunts on Dartmoor.

[Read more](#)



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We have reinstated over 23ha of essential foraging areas for the sarus crane.

Helping the sarus crane thrive

The Lower Mekong region in Cambodia is home to some of the world's most important wetlands, and Cambodia is one of the world's most wetland-dependent countries. Now in the second year of our grassland restoration project at Boeung Prek Lapouv Protected Landscape in Cambodia, we have reinstated over 23ha of essential foraging areas for the sarus crane, alongside supporting sustainable agriculture, ecotourism and habitat restoration work. This work, supported by the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund, is helping protect future livelihoods for the local communities, and increasing climate resilience across the region.

[Read more](#)

New success for corncrake hatching

We have achieved the highest corncrake hatching success rate for parent-reared birds yet. Of the 230 eggs laid, 80% successfully hatched. In partnership with Natural England, the Pensthorpe Conservation Trust, Zoological Society of London and the the RSPB, 109 corncrake fledglings were subsequently released at WWT Welney between June and August 2022.

Creating opportunities for change

Our conservation work is vital

But it's even more important that people understand the message of our work, and join our cause to fight for the future of wetland habitats. We raise this awareness both by creating lasting and meaningful connections with nature through storytelling and adventure, and also through our growing influence on the international stage.

Over the past year our presence at the Ramsar Conference of Parties (COP), has helped secure important resolutions in the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework that specifically reference wetlands. We have also launched the Star wetland Centre Awards – the first accreditation system of its kind in the world. The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands is the intergovernmental treaty that provides the framework for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources.

Putting an end to lead shot

Our long-running and committed campaigning against the use of lead ammunition has finally had an impact. The new law came into effect in all 27 EU countries as well as Iceland, Norway and Lichtenstein on 15 February 2023. It will not only help protect the health of wetlands, but could lead to saving the lives of millions of birds. This important milestone marks the end of a two year transition period to allow countries to ditch lead for non-toxic ammunition.

[Read more](#)

It is now illegal to use lead shot in and around wetlands in all 27 EU countries as well as Iceland, Norway and Lichtenstein.

Public awareness* in the UK is increasing:

+6%

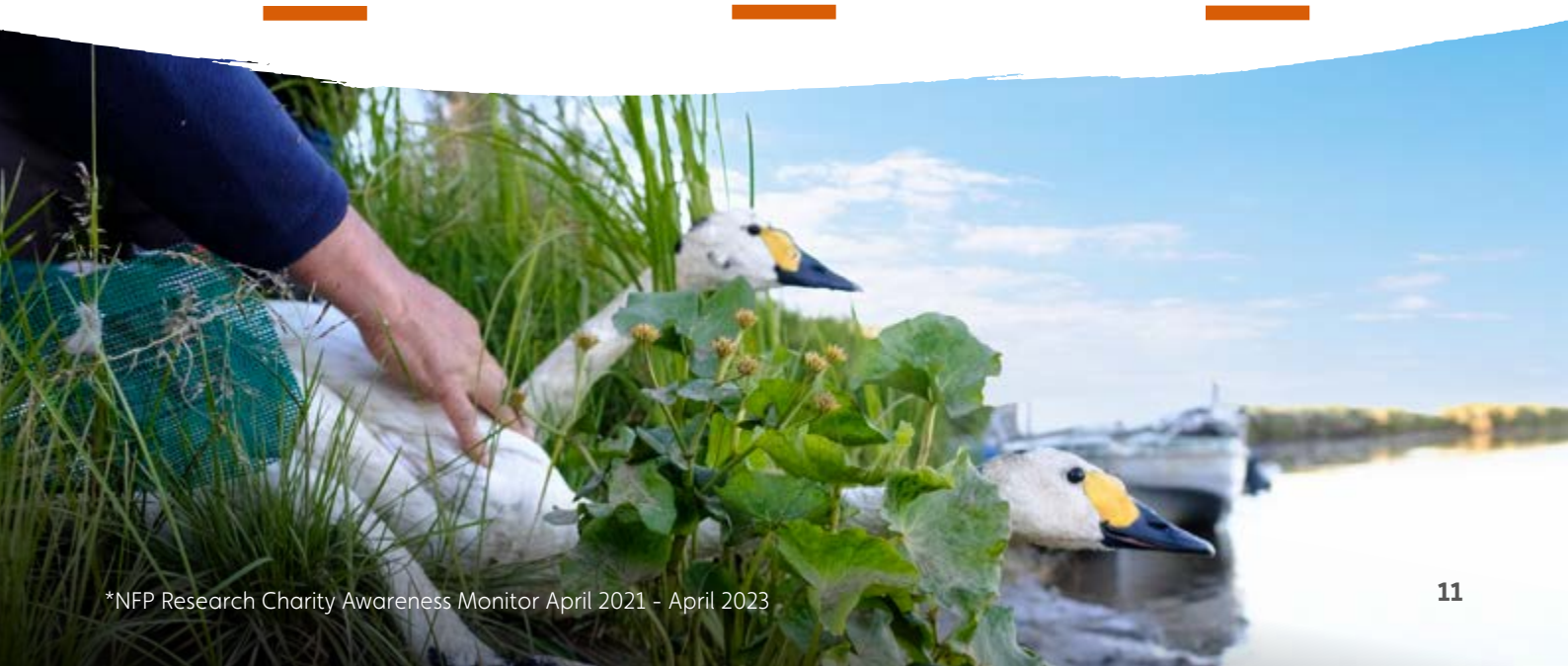
general awareness of wetlands

+11%

awareness of wetlands' role in fighting climate change

+9%

awareness of loss of wetlands



Spreading the word

Moving and shaking

Although wetlands are our first home, we're no stranger to the corridors of power. Delivering change on the scale required can only be achieved through working with government and individuals and organisations across society. In March 2022, WWT launched the 'Blue Recovery Leaders Group', now consisting of 12 members – National Grid, Eversheds Sutherland, Triodos, Invesco UK, Severn Trent Water, Ground Control, People's Postcode Lottery, Cushman & Wakefield, The Church Commissioners for England, Jacobs, Berkeley Group and The Crown Estate. The Group works to pioneer new solutions, creating and restoring wetlands as a means to achieving commercial, environmental, and social objectives.

We are also the provider of the secretariat for the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Wetlands, making us central to national work that recognises, celebrates and promotes wetlands as a nature-based solution to the challenges we face.

[Read more](#)

The APPG for wetlands has helped to drive support among politicians, with 28 signatories to letters and six MPs raising the issue in PMQs.



Building global partnerships

The East Asian-Australasian Flyway (EAAF) is the most species-rich flyway in the world, supporting millions of water birds that migrate from the Arctic to tropical Asia and Australia. It is also the most threatened flyway, due to intense pressure from rapid economic development.

This year, we have been working with a long list of international partners to build local wetland conservation capacity, provide awareness of wetlands and wetland issues, and to influence key decision makers along the flyway. This included the publication of a report on the Hwaseong Wetlands in the Republic of Korea, an important coastal site on the Yellow Sea.

Our report on the Hwaseong Wetlands promotes wetland conservation and ecotourism as viable alternatives to industrial development.

Engaging wetland supporters

Wetlands don't just benefit the wildlife that live in them

They are a vital part of our national ecosystem, and communities cannot thrive and survive without them. That's why we put so much focus on empowering communities and giving them the tools so they can contribute to the health and future of these essential habitats.

To see this focus in action, look no further than our work in Slough and Richmond, where we continue to develop our plans to improve flood resilience, wellbeing and biodiversity. As part of the Defra Flood and Coastal Resilience Innovation Programme, the Richmond project now extends into the London Borough of Wandsworth, incorporating a large housing estate within the Beverley Brook catchment. While in Slough, Slough Borough Council and WWT have agreed to extend the project into 2027.

Working together with landowners, volunteers, local government and residents, our community engagement projects enable people to make decisions about and gain control of their environment, making sure that wetland conservation works for them.

We empower communities to contribute to the health and future of wetlands.



Power to the people

Building brighter futures

We have been fostering the development of eager volunteers and 'citizen scientists' with projects like the restored floodplain grazing marsh in Meads Eco Park in Somerset. Working with our enthusiastic local teams, scrapes have been created, rhynes now have water control structures in place to help improve aquatic flora communities, and the site is now subject to conservation grazing for the first time.

Two Valleys, one voice

Through the Two Valleys Natural Flood Management project, we have put power back in the hands of the residents of West Somerset around the Monksilver and Doniford streams. Enabled by the Green Recovery Challenge Fund, the individual wetland interventions of the scheme are now fully integrated and managed by local stakeholders.

To help them decide where natural flood management interventions could be created and learn more about their benefits to wetlands and the wildlife in their area, we have delivered workshops, community events and produced a toolkit.

[Read more](#)



**We have delivered
Natural Flood Management
solutions to 35 different farms
and other land holdings.**

Improving lives around the world

In line with our ambition to build a broader and better-trained scientific research community in Madagascar, we are providing climate change vulnerability assessment training for wetland conservationists. We are doing this at the country's 21 Ramsar sites. We are also developing training packages that will focus on fulfilling research needs for Malagasy wetlands.

We are also developing a proposal that will enable us to map the condition and pressures facing Madagascar's wetlands using satellite remote sensing. If successful, we envisage this tool being used by civil society, government and funders to prioritise wetland conservation action in Madagascar and the wider Global South.

[Read more](#)

**We provide climate change
vulnerability assessment training
for wetland conservationists at the
country's 21 Ramsar Sites.**



£3.5m

WWT Steart Marshes will deliver health benefits worth up to £3.5 million in the next 10 years.



I really liked the fact it gave us lots of concrete ideas about how to connect with nature in our daily lives to help boost our mental health.

From a blue prescribing participant

A natural path to wellbeing

Countless studies have shown that a better connection to nature is essential for our health and wellbeing.

What's more, 'blue spaces' such as wetlands are shown to deliver even greater benefits than 'green spaces'. With record numbers of people being diagnosed with depression, anxiety and stress, access to nature is even more important than ever.

Our outreach work and presence at 10 UK sites is helping people regain a sense of peace and provide a place to recuperate and escape life's daily stresses. WWT Steart Marshes alone expected to deliver health benefits worth up to £3.5 million in the next 10 years.

Incredible results for 'blue' healthcare

Social prescribing - A new 'blue' nature prescription

Wetlands have a unique role to play in supporting our physical and mental health, which we help deliver through our pioneering Blue Prescribing project. We work with healthcare professionals to offer them the means to refer patients to non-clinical services to improve their health and wellbeing. But the benefits don't stop there – Blue Prescribing is shown to be of enormous economic value too. Our research shows that every £1 spent on WWT Blue Prescribing and wider activities at WWT Steart Marshes yielded £9.30 of 'social value' for participants.

[Read more](#)

New milestones for Generation Wild

We already know through our Generation Wild programme that a connection with nature improves child physical and mental health. With the ranks swelling this year, a total of 13,596 primary-age children completed 27,500 nature activities in their school grounds, gardens and local nature spaces. Those completing ten or more activities – 1,250 children – became 'Guardians of the Wild'.

The feedback from teachers and parents was excellent. Here are just some of the comments we received: "Some of the children have hugely traumatic lives. One girl was selectively mute. She was really quiet the first time she visited the wetland. But on her second visit, she didn't stop talking! When I took a video and showed it to her class teacher, she cried, as they'd never heard the girl's voice before. Now the child puts up her hand in lessons and asks questions. That's how much it works."

[Read more](#)



It's amazingly fun. It gives us so much more to do, instead of being inside on our electronics (phones)

From a Generation Wild participant

Engaging with the public

Wetlands Can!

Last year we launched Wetlands Can!, a programme aiming to share the wonder of wetlands with the general public, and encourage them to take action for these precious places. We ran a major multimedia campaign in February to mark World Wetlands Day, featuring a 3D mural showing a degraded wetland turning into one in which nature thrives. Working with our visitor centres and the Blue Recovery Leaders Group, we took the mural on a 12-date tour of the UK, which achieved outstanding results in audience engagement, as well as engagement from Chris Packham and Birdgirl, and substantial press coverage by the BBC, ITV and others.

World Wetlands Day

34

Press coverage items



7000+

Mural interactions



+15k

Pledges for Wetlands Can



+31%

Potential WWT supporters



[Read more](#)



+19k

Listeners to our podcast



We launched our first podcast - 'Waterlands'. This immersive podcast explores the incredible wetlands we have here in the UK through the stories of people and wildlife that have been shaped by them.

[Add to playlist](#)

WWT on the BBC

On 4th December 2022, a huge audience tuned in to watch the 'Winter Wonders' episode of BBC Countryfile from our site in Slimbridge. The episode showcased the wonderful wetland waterscapes of Slimbridge and was a fantastic opportunity to educate viewers about these unique habitats and what they have to offer. It also included the building of new crane islands for breeding and an in-depth look at the reed bed system. The show reached an astounding 92,500,000 people across multiple platforms.

A warmer welcome to visitors

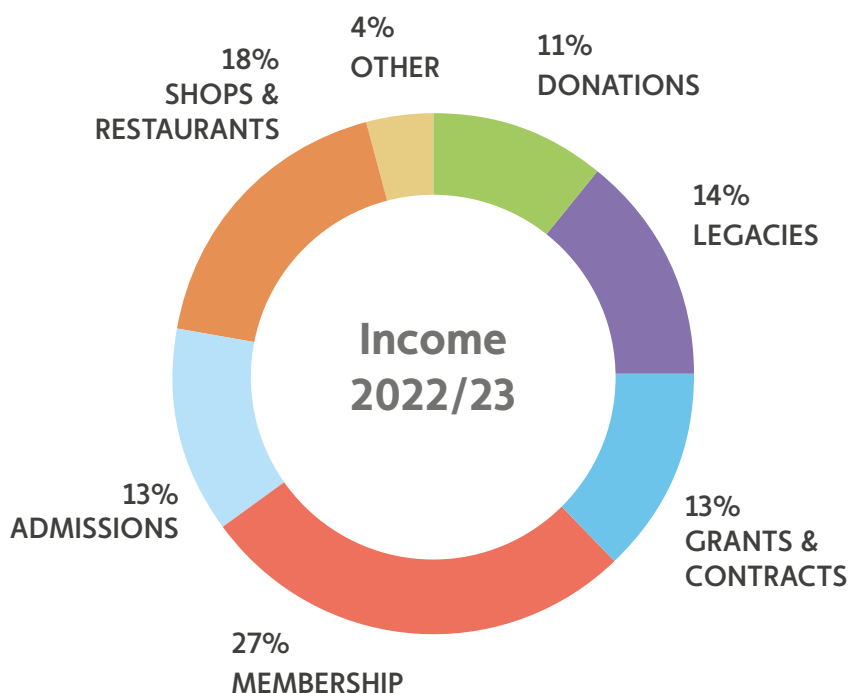
Our Experience and Engagement team made great progress in enhancing visitor experiences across our sites this year. These included the refurbishment of the Peacock Tower hide at WWT London, funded by the Kusuma Trust UK. The refurbishment and relaunch of Welly Boot Land at WWT Slimbridge. We also created a captivating willow sphere at WWT Arundel, and two hides that overlook new habitats created in Woodend Marsh at WWT Martin Mere. These examples demonstrate our commitment to creating immersive experiences and educating the public about wetland conservation.

Financial information 2022-23

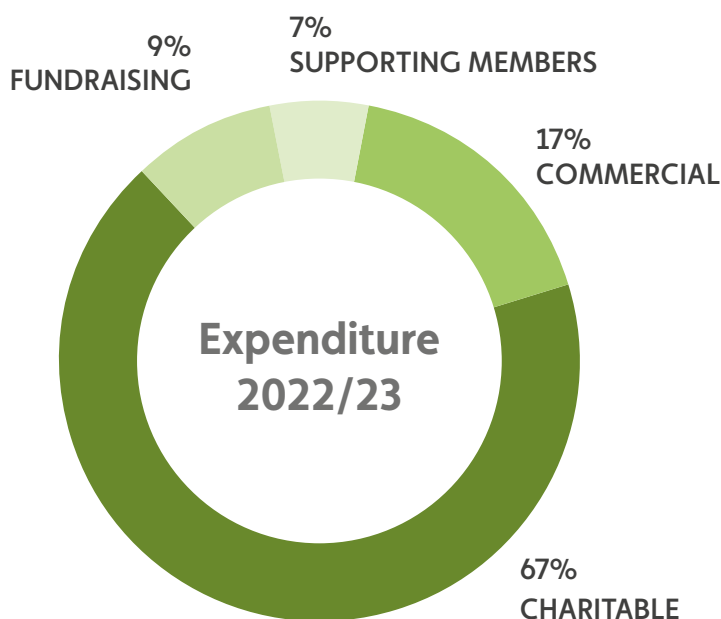
Your support is essential for us to continue delivering amazing achievements like those you've read about above.

Total income for the year was lower at £26.1m, a decrease of £0.9m on the previous year's £27m. The year before that, 2020/21, was largely affected by the global Coronavirus pandemic and income was £20.9m. Total expenditure increased 20% to £28.7m from £24m in 2021/22 with expenditure on charitable activities increasing 22% from £17.3m to £21.2m.

INCOME	£'000
DONATIONS	2790
LEGACIES	3666
ADMISSIONS	3383
MEMBERSHIP	7109
GRANTS & CONTRACTS	3513
SHOPS & RESTAURANTS	4667
OTHER	951
TOTAL INCOME	£26,079



EXPENDITURE	£'000
CHARITABLE	19,259
COMMERCIAL	4875
SUPPORTING MEMBERS	1919
FUNDRAISING	2624
OTHER	55
TOTAL INCOME	£28,732



A bright future for wetlands

As we take our next steps in our conservation journey together, we'll be exploring several fruitful areas of opportunity. Here are just some of the areas we will be developing in the coming year.



More profound partnerships

With your help we can break new ground in key scientific research and development areas that provide replicable solutions at scale.

Recently we have embarked on a pioneering partnership with Aviva that will help us restore and manage up to 250ha of saltmarsh and fund research into measuring and maximising its benefits.



A louder call to arms

With your support we can reach more people than ever before, being bolder and more confident in our mission to create a movement to engage more people with wetlands. We have recently received support from Ocean Outdoor, who are providing half a million pounds of outdoor digital advertising space in the coming year to help us reach more people.



Capacity building

At the Ramsar COP14 we are proud to have announced the enrolment of the first cohort into the WWT Global Wetland Learning Hub. Working together we can develop new tools, like this new global education resource, which has already attracted over 350 applications from 46 countries. The first enrolment will take on a cohort of 50 people in 2023, with plans to learn from the pilot and scale up in the coming years.



Empowering communities

Working together with other local community organisations we want to equip people with the conservation skills to take care of wetland nature on their doorstep. In Bridgwater, Somerset we have begun helping the next generation of conservationists to deal with climate change and flooding through work with four schools. Alongside a new learning programme teaching children about flooding and the climate emergency, we will be supporting them in installing sustainable drainage systems (SuDS). These are wetland features such as ponds, swales and rain gardens, that will help reduce flood risk and boost biodiversity.



Why not join the movement for wetlands?

If you want to become a part of the incredible work we are delivering, email Peter Lee, Head of Philanthropy & Partnerships, and he'll be delighted to speak with you.

We look forward to taking the next steps on this journey together, and delivering a thriving future for wetlands everywhere.



Peter.Lee@wwt.org.uk
Head of Philanthropy & Partnerships



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