



# WWT STRATEGY

## 2017 – 2022





# OUR VISION

*A world where healthy wetland nature thrives and enriches lives.*

Our six big goals for wetlands over the next 25 years:

- 1 The UK's wetlands and their wildlife are thriving and increasing.
- 2 Everyone in the UK can access wetlands that provide amazing experiences and inspire support for their conservation.
- 3 Wetlands in the UK are recognised as part of our natural infrastructure providing space for wildlife and people and vital services to us all.
- 4 Decision makers globally understand the threats to wetland nature and are taking ambitious action to remove them.
- 5 Wetlands are managed in a way that benefits wetland nature and enhances people's lives across the world.
- 6 Risks are decreasing for all wetland nature and no species have gone extinct.

# WHAT PART WILL WE PLAY?

## 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.

## Our approach

We have a very ambitious vision for wetlands over the next 25 years. It describes what we want the world to look like by 2040.

It explains why wetlands are so important for wetland nature and in providing a wealth of benefits to people. The vision also recognises that human society, through its growing population and increasing demand on natural resources, poses a big problem, but is also the solution.

We have always recognised the need to engage people and enrich lives, offering solutions that consider both wetland nature and people for the benefit of both.

Our 25 year vision goals are ambitious. We face major challenges.

We will need to be focused in what we do, where our work can be most effective and what we are uniquely capable of achieving. But we must also think flexibly, so that we are capable of seizing important opportunities that arise.

We will demonstrate and offer solutions which enrich people's lives while conserving wetland nature.

We will need solutions relevant to individuals, communities, businesses and governments in the UK and globally and be capable of communicating these solutions to relevant stakeholders and the public at large. We believe that this approach will deliver the strongest opportunities we have to achieve our vision.

Over the next 25 years our part in realising our vision will be to:

- Demonstrate and offer practical and achievable solutions creating, restoring and managing wildlife-rich wetlands in the UK.
- Engage people with wetland nature – at our wetlands, and where they live and work in the UK, by demonstrating the benefits of wetlands to us all.
- Work with partners and inform and inspire key stakeholders and wider society, encouraging support and wider action for wetland conservation.
- Identify key global hotspots and flyways where development pressures are most acute, and impact on wetland nature the most damaging, and develop long term community-based projects which balance wetland conservation and community development and livelihoods.
- Use these examples and our knowledge to influence national wetland policies and programmes in these critical areas and offer and promote solutions to others.

Our five year WWT strategy focuses on five key aims. They are our first milestones towards achieving our 25 year vision for wetlands.



WWT Castle Espie Wetland Centre

# OUR 5 YEAR AIMS...



WWT Steart Marshes

## Aim 1

*Create, restore and manage larger, more connected and more healthy wetlands in the UK.*

WWT has a long history of creating, restoring and managing some of the UK's most important wetlands. However many wetlands are isolated pockets in an otherwise poor landscape for wildlife. Even these precious remnants can be unhealthy due to pollution or drainage. Many wetlands have lost at least some of the animals and plants for which they previously provided a home.

We are only just beginning to understand how vital wetlands are in providing services to people – the

“natural wealth” of wetlands. Wildlife-rich wetlands can work hard for us, storing and cleaning our water and helping to reduce the impacts of flooding and erosion, as well as being a source of enjoyment and well-being for us all. We like to call these “working wetlands”.

Part of our direct action is to create, restore, protect and manage nature-rich wetlands. More, healthy wetlands will also have huge benefits for us too - healthy wetlands mean healthy people.

## Outcome **A**

**We have created and restored wildlife-rich “working wetlands” which provide multiple benefits to people.**

### Why

For us, and for thousands of people around the UK, the wonder of wetlands and the wildlife they support is reason enough to create, restore and protect them. However wetlands also provide many benefits to human society in addition to being essential homes for wildlife. The provision of these benefits, such as reducing flooding and protecting homes, means there is a much higher potential for encouraging key decision-makers and securing funding to create more wetlands.

In other words, by recognising the “natural wealth” of wetlands we can create and restore wetlands that provide critical benefits to people and wildlife.

### How

Working with others we will develop working wetlands varying in size from simple farm wetlands to areas on a catchment scale. Projects will include reconnecting rivers to their floodplains, and restoring wetlands in upper catchments and coastal areas.

In doing this, we will work with landowners to show how wetlands can tackle diffuse pollution, reduce flooding and provide sustainable food for people.

We will show that wetlands can work for wildlife while also providing a “natural wealth” of benefits to people, and then use these solutions to offer advice to others.

### Case study:

#### WWT Steart

With the Environment Agency, we’ve created a vast 490 hectare wetland in Somerset. Providing homes for wildlife and a special place to enjoy, the wetlands also help protect local houses from flooding and reduce the risks of coastal erosion.

## Outcome **B**

**We have restored and reconnected wetland landscapes around our wetland reserves.**

### Why

We recognise the importance of landscape scale conservation efforts to reinstate healthy and natural wetlands, including the full wildlife spectacles that these places once delivered. Some of our existing nature reserves sit within formerly vast wetland landscapes which have been reduced and fragmented and their wildlife value diminished.

These are also places where we have a strong local profile among people and conservation organisations. These landscapes are therefore the logical place for us to develop large-scale wetland restoration programmes.

### How

By working more closely with local landowners, statutory bodies and communities, and applying our working wetland approach where relevant, we will be more active in driving opportunities for wetland restoration in the catchments in which our wetland reserves sit.

We will initially focus on Steart and Slimbridge and our vision for the Severn catchment, but develop similar “opportunity maps” at other reserves including Caerlaverock, Arundel and Martin Mere and implement plans where feasible. At all reserves we will continue to assess and act on opportunities to extend the wetland area we manage or protect.

### Case study:

#### WWT Welney

We have transformed over 120 ha of former vegetable fields back to wetlands next to our reserve. These wet grasslands provide feeding for large numbers of wintering birds, as well as breeding sites for wading birds including the seriously declining black-tailed godwit.

## **We have restored populations of species which have been nationally, regionally or locally lost from wetlands.**

### *Why*

Many wetland species have been lost from the UK entirely and many more lost regionally or locally. Other populations have been reduced to the brink of extinction. In many cases there is potential for recovery: in recent decades habitats have been restored and pollution and persecution reduced.

However, recolonisation and recovery can be limited, because species cannot disperse easily to new sites, and because small populations often increase very slowly. We believe that efforts to create healthy wetlands wherever they are should be accompanied by efforts to restore their full set of native species, creating more robust ecosystems.

### *How*

We are a leader in techniques to translocate and closely manage small populations, accelerating their recovery. We will continue to encourage the recovery of the common crane in western Britain, and common scoter in Highland Scotland. We will help restore populations of black-tailed godwit in the Norfolk and Cambridgeshire fens. We will use our translocation and hands-on species management skills to implement further recovery projects, for lost and critically small bird populations and potentially other wetland species.

### *Case study:*

#### *Putting wetland species back*

In restored wetlands of the Cambridgeshire and Norfolk fens we are helping to put back lost breeding populations of the increasingly scarce black-tailed godwit. Godwits are being released as fledged birds reared from eggs in special facilities.



## Outcome **D**

**Our wetland reserves have improved for wetland nature and are supporting new species and habitats.**

### Why

We manage over 5,500 ha of amazing wetlands, much of which is designated as being of national or international importance for wildlife. All our reserves face pressures, but also opportunities, and we have targets to bring some habitats and species back to what is termed “favourable ecological condition”.

We also need to adapt our reserves continuously to challenges such as climate change. In addition, there are opportunities to increase key wildlife populations through hands-on management of habitats and species.

### How

We will manage our wetland reserves innovatively to maximise their wildlife value. We will actively restore lost or depleted populations of priority wetland species. We will further develop our plans to assess the likely changes to our reserves as a result of climate change and how we need to adapt. We will encourage populations of species whose distribution is changing due to climate change.

### Case study:

#### Adapting our management

Numbers of wintering European white-fronted geese have decreased at the WWT Slimbridge reserve as a result of fewer migrating to the UK. So we have adapted our management, successfully developing more tussocky wet grasslands suitable for ground nesting wading birds.

## Outcome **E**

**The importance of wetland nature and the “natural wealth” of wetlands is more widely recognised by decision makers across the UK.**

### Why

Delivering the scale and breadth of change we need for our wetland nature and restoring the full services that wetlands can offer for people will require widespread action and investment to change how we use land and water. This will only be possible if governments recognise the value of this investment, support mapping of the potential across the UK, and apply joined-up thinking at a catchment scale.

### How

We will offer solutions for improvements in law, policy and funding for wetland conservation and restoration. We will continue to work in Westminster and devolved parliaments, offering policy solutions to all political parties based on scientific, practical and policy know-how.

We will map and evaluate the best wetlands in the UK for delivering multiple benefits for wildlife and people. We will provide demonstrations and training for key stakeholders in the creation and management of multi-benefit wetlands and undertake research to show these benefits are real and substantial for both wildlife and people.



## Outcome **F**

**Environmental protection of UK wetlands is as strong or stronger in our new relationship with the EU.**

### *Why*

The exit from the EU represents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to influence the entire framework of wildlife conservation in the UK. There is a risk that the level of environmental protection we have under EU law may be reduced and the protection of our wetlands weakened.

In order to have a strong voice at this moment of profound change, the conservation movement needs to provide a coherent, joined up and evidence-based approach.

### *How*

We will continue to lobby and provide policy and practical examples showing how future laws and policies can support wildlife-friendly land and water management with multiple benefits.

We will reinforce our work with targeted media and campaigning work, creating opportunities for our members and supporters to contribute to the conservation of wetland nature in the UK.

We will continue to work with other organisations, lending our collective support to dealing with national governmental issues impacting on wetlands.

## Outcome **G**

**Threats to wetlands are more widely recognised and the impacts of some reduced.**

### *Why*

The conservation of wetlands in the UK depends primarily on tackling the pressures caused by human activities. Many of these threats, like climate change, are global in scope and will only be combated by huge international efforts across multiple agencies.

Some threats can be reduced at a national scale through researching and communicating solutions to stakeholders, raising awareness and encouraging joint efforts across society.

### *How*

We will use our voice to inform and inspire, offering practical solutions to some key threats to wetlands and encouraging policy changes and action. We will target key decision makers, and also our visitors, supporters and wider public to show that we can all help.

We will focus on water pollution, low river flows, invasive non-native species colonising UK wetlands and the loss of healthy peatlands. We will research and communicate solutions to other threats as part of our wider international work, but which are still relevant in the UK. These include the harvesting of waterbirds, lead poisoning, wildlife disease and collisions with powerlines and wind farms.

# OUR 5 YEAR AIMS...



WWT Arundel Wetland Centre

## Aim 2

*Move and inspire people engaging with our wetlands to support wetland conservation.*

Connecting people to wetlands and wetland nature has always been a major role for WWT and over one million people visit our wetlands every year.

Through encountering wetlands up close, the activities they can do, and how we engage with them, we aim for all our visitors to have an amazing wetland experience. Through this positive engagement we believe visitors can be inspired to become wetland supporters and protectors.

## Outcome **A**

**We are providing amazing experiences for our key audiences, recognising their interests and their motivation to engage with us.**

### Why

We want to improve the experiences people have of the wetlands we look after. Positive experiences are more likely to result in people supporting or protecting wetlands. We recognise these experiences will be different according to people's varied motivations for engaging with us in the first place.

### How

We will improve the standard of our visitor experience across all our wetlands and change the way we engage with our different visitor audiences, making sure we communicate effectively before, during and after a visit.

We will be innovative in how we develop and theme programmes, events, activities and new developments. We will embrace new technology, while ensuring the focus remains on providing real experiences with wetlands and wetland nature, including our living collections.

Our emphasis will be on creating an experience that reveals something new on every visit and aims to connect people with wetland nature in profound and meaningful ways.

### Case study:

#### Making nature watching easier

We have developed some of our bird watching hides to be more friendly for families and those learning their nature watching skills, such as this amazing new observatory at WWT Martin Mere.

## Outcome **B**

**More visitors to our wetlands are supporting our work and taking their own direct action for wetlands.**

### Why

We want our visitors to leave our wetlands inspired and informed about how amazing wetlands are, and their value to wildlife and to all our lives. We want to encourage a broader understanding of the threats to wetlands, but also an understanding of the solutions and what we can all do to help.

To achieve this we need to fully engage visitors by understanding their own needs and motivations and supplying relevant information and tools.

### How

Recognising our different audiences, we will ensure that we use a range of engagement tools and messages to allow visitors to develop their own journey towards becoming supporters of wetland conservation.

We will recognise that some journeys will be short, others longer, but all are important to us.

We will improve the messaging at our centres to show how amazing wetlands are, the benefits they provide and the ways in which we can manage them better. We will engage visitors more with our work and the solutions we can offer for UK and international wetland conservation, including calls to action where we can all make a difference.



# OUR 5 YEAR AIMS...



Soest, Netherlands

## Aim 3

*Connect people with wetlands where they live and work in the UK.*

In addition to seeking inspiration from our wetlands, there are opportunities for all of us to connect and engage with wetlands where people live and work.

From ponds and mini-wetlands in our own gardens, to wetlands in our local community and stream and

river corridors through our towns and cities; there are opportunities to create new wetlands that provide homes for wildlife while providing vital services such as preventing local flooding, cleaning up water and providing important green (and “blue”) spaces for people.

## Outcome **A**

**Wildlife-rich urban “working wetlands” are providing multiple benefits to communities.**

### Why

Development of urban wetlands can not only provide places for wetland nature, but also better and more diverse urban landscapes, connecting people to blue and green spaces whilst providing multiple benefits. Evidence increasingly shows that being near wetlands can bring substantial benefits to human health and well-being.

### How

We will develop a series of community-led working wetland projects in UK cities to show how we can overcome many of the barriers to the creation and management of urban wetlands.

This will include addressing the skills gap in how to design and create urban wetlands for multiple benefits, and how to fully engage communities, local authorities and other stakeholders in the process.

We will show how to establish mechanisms for local management, allay concerns over safety and show that the multiple benefits are real. We will work with developers, stakeholders and decision makers to make it easier for wildlife-rich wetlands to be part of new developments. We will also recognise the value of these wetlands in reaching vulnerable and less privileged groups.

### Case study:

#### Community wetlands in Slough

We are working with local communities to restore the Salt Hill stream. We will create wonderful new and diverse places for wetland wildlife in the heart of urban Slough which will also be great places for local people. At the same time the wetlands will help reduce pollution and risk of local flooding.

## Outcome **B**

**Households, communities, pupils and employees are connecting with their own wildlife-rich wetlands.**

### Why

One way of connecting people to wetlands where they live, work or learn is to create wetlands at individual homes, in schools and community spaces and in commercial buildings.

At the right scale this has the opportunity to generate a vast collective area of new, restored or better managed wildlife-rich wetlands.

Many local wetlands can also be lost or their value reduced by a lack of ownership, poor management or through inappropriate development.

### How

We will give advice, toolkits, products, training and demonstrations that will make it easier for people to create their own wetlands with real value to wildlife. This will result in attractive gardens, courtyards and places for relaxation and recreation which have the added advantage of alleviating flooding and improving water quality.

We will use examples of these wetlands to support a national programme of wetland creation at a domestic or commercial property level.

We will develop simple online guidance to help communities or individuals understand what they can do to help adopt and manage their local wetlands and to protect them from inappropriate and damaging development.

### Case study:

#### Hands on learning

We are working with schools in London to show how mini-wetlands like ponds and bog gardens can help prevent their playground or car park from flooding while at the same time provide fantastic hands on places to learn about nature and the water cycle.

## Outcome **C**

**The health and well-being benefits to people of being close to wetlands and wetland nature are better understood and recognised.**

### *Why*

In modern societies, people increasingly suffer from the consequences of urban living, such as physical inactivity combined with stress. Evidence is growing that access to wildlife and wild places is hugely beneficial to people's health and wellbeing. It can improve both mental and physical health, reducing levels of anxiety, stress and depression.

Yet, limited access to wild spaces is a growing reality in the modern world, most acute among the poor and disadvantaged, but also across the board as populations become more urban and digitally immersed.

We know that the human species has a special and inherent relationship with water and wetlands, but often people do not realise it. If the link between blue space and human health is recognised by decision-makers, it could become a powerful motivation for the creation and restoration of many new wetlands, which would improve lives and create more space for wetland wildlife.

### *How*

We will investigate the health and wellbeing benefits of having access specifically to wetlands, and explore how these benefits can be maximised.

We will demonstrate how decision-makers can put these ideas into practice, through the creation and restoration of healthy wetlands with public access.

To overcome barriers to action, we will try to draw together the politicians, and planners who decide how land will be used, with the agencies that are responsible for peoples' health and wellbeing.

## Outcome **D**

**Decision makers recognise the importance of supporting access to blue and green spaces and the potential multiple benefits of wetlands in towns and cities.**

### *Why*

The creation of multi-benefit working wetlands where people live throughout the UK will only be achieved if there is stronger recognition in government policy and planning law of the importance of green and blue spaces.

Similarly, the potential for urban wetlands to provide natural flood defence is not fully recognised, and consequently is not well supported by planning and policy.

### *How*

We will continue to lobby for access to natural spaces to become a standard for local authorities. We will campaign for multi-benefit wetlands to be a requirement of all new build developments in the UK, together with a national retrofit programme where wetlands are created in existing developments.



## OUR 5 YEAR AIMS...



Lake Sofia, Madagascar

# Aim 4

offer and promote solutions to conserve the world's most threatened wetland hotspots and improve the livelihoods of their people.

Wetlands support a very large share of global biodiversity.

Wetlands in the tropics are the most species-rich, but in many developing countries they are being degraded and destroyed at an alarming rate.

Many of these wetlands support the livelihoods of some of the world's poorest people; if they are degraded it is often these people who are affected the most.

Conserving wetland nature depends upon working with these communities, and with other partners, to create ways of improving lives without further wetland loss.

# Outcome **A**

## Long term, community-based wetland management projects are under way in our priority countries.

### Why

Our resources are best focused on hotspots of wetland biodiversity where the threats from unsustainable development are large but also where opportunities to make a difference are highest. Promotion of community-based management of wetlands in these developing countries is crucial. We have identified three priority countries.

**Madagascar:** a place of extreme wetland loss, most severe on the central plateau where almost all remaining wetlands are severely degraded and many of the species that rely on them, including the Madagascar pochard, are on the brink of extinction. This situation is catastrophic for the local people. In a poor economy based on agriculture and harvesting of natural resources, the environmental damage links directly to poverty and unsustainable futures.

**Cambodia:** a country where 30% of the surface is wetland and 80% of the population depend on harvesting natural resources for their livelihoods. On the lower Mekong floodplain the vast, seasonally-flooded grasslands have been almost entirely lost to intensification of agriculture.

**Myanmar:** the diversity of wetland nature here is almost unrivalled and includes numerous globally threatened species. The relative isolation of Myanmar has helped preserve much of this value but as the political landscape changes there is both a unique conservation opportunity and a risk of rapid over-exploitation.



### How

We will develop community-based conservation projects in Madagascar, continuing to run projects that help protect natural resources and wetland nature at Lake Sofia. We will extend our work to other sites on the plateau. We will continue to lead the recovery of Madagascar pochard, using our work on this critically endangered flagship to drive the restoration of wetlands.

In Cambodia we will build on previous work on now protected wet grasslands on the Mekong, finding ways to co-manage them with local communities and extending our work to other sites on the floodplain.

We will seek opportunities to develop projects in Myanmar, working to integrate wetland conservation into development programmes. We will consider opportunities for working in other threatened wetland hotspots where community-led restoration and management can be part of the solution to the loss of wetland nature.

### Case study:

#### Mission Madagascar

We are working with communities that live on the shores of Lake Sofia in the north of Madagascar to help develop sustainable management of the wetlands to benefit both wildlife and people. In addition to being one of the most intact lakes in Madagascar, Lake Sofia is also a potential home for the world's most endangered duck, the Madagascar pochard.



## Outcome **B**

**Solutions we offer are being used to support national programmes of wetland conservation and sustainable development.**

### Why

Developing local projects to demonstrate solutions that link wetland conservation and wetland livelihoods are essential, but are only the start of influencing national-scale change.

Our expertise in engaging with people and partners, and offering practical wetland management and skills in species recovery, can help influence national programmes. We need to demonstrate that wetland conservation can be part of sustainable economic development.

### How

We will expand our national level advocacy in Madagascar, building on the work on the plateau wetlands, and seek opportunities, working with others, to influence broader wetland conservation and management in Cambodia and Myanmar.

We will offer our solutions to decision-makers, build capacity in national organisations, and use our expertise in communication, education and public awareness (CEPA) to build support generally.

### Case study:

#### *Saving wetlands, changing lives*

Few fragments remain of the wetlands of southern Cambodia and Vietnam that are so vitally important for the sarus crane and many other globally threatened species. Historically, poor agricultural practices destroyed the wetlands. But we're now working with communities to develop alternatives that reduce pressure on the wetlands while providing people with sustainable livelihoods.

## Outcome **C**

**Solutions we present for wetland conservation in priority developing countries are influencing others globally.**

### Why

Presenting solutions from the long term priority country programmes to other international conservation bodies and decision-makers could help influence the conservation of threatened wetland hotspots globally.

### How

We will use our position as an International Organisation Partner (IOP) with Ramsar to offer integrated conservation and development solutions to other international programmes.

We will use our leadership of the World Wetland Network and Wetland Link International to share our messages with a global network of grassroots conservation organisations and wetland centres.

We will provide global consultancy advice to others working on sustainable wetland development projects.



# OUR 5 YEAR AIMS...



Mai Po Nature Reserve and Shenzhen City, Hong Kong

## Aim 5

### Strengthen wetland conservation on priority global flyways.

Migratory flyway populations are always subject to risk because they depend on multiple wetlands across numerous international boundaries.

The flyways across East Asia and Australasia and across Northwest Europe take birds through some of the most developed regions in the world.

Wetlands are being lost and degraded and managed unsustainably in many places across these flyways. Birds that rely on breeding sites at high latitude are impacted by rapid climate change.

By focusing on threats to migratory populations along these priority flyways, we can help protect the wetlands on which they depend.

# Outcome **A**

## Wetland conservation in the East Asian Australasian flyway has been strengthened.

### Why

The East Asian Australasian flyway is the most species-rich waterbird flyway in the world, supporting millions of waterbirds that migrate from the arctic to tropical Asia and Australia.

It is also the most threatened, with intense pressures arising from rapid economic development, with China being pivotal both in its size and economic power but also in its influence on the whole flyway.

### How

We have been engaged on this flyway for several years through efforts to save flagship waterbird species (spoon-billed sandpiper, Baer's pochard, scaly-sided merganser), building local capacity and supporting sustainable wetland management.

We will continue to work to save the spoon-billed sandpiper as a flagship species for intertidal wetlands along the flyway. Measures to save this charismatic species will also benefit numerous other coastal species. We will expand our work to save Baer's pochard as a flagship species for freshwater wetlands on the flyway.

We will support our direct work through political advocacy for wetlands. We will work to strengthen the East Asian Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP), develop our status as an International Organisation Partner (IOP) and champion the delivery of Ramsar's CEPA programme; we will also use other multilateral environmental agreements to support conservation action on the flyway.

We will expand our work in China with a focus on developing and demonstrating solutions for species conservation and wetland protection and restoration. We will undertake capacity building for local wetland managers.

By partnering with key organisations and further developing our relationship with government, we aim to influence wetland policy in China.

### Case study:

#### Saving coastal wetlands

Using the plight of the spoon-billed sandpiper, the world's rarest wading bird, we are flagging up measures needed to help protect and manage vital intertidal and coastal wetlands along its migration route from Russia to Southeast Asia.



# Outcome **B**

## Waterbird conservation in the Northwest European flyway has been strengthened.

### Why

The waterbirds that winter in the British Isles represent one of the UK's most important contributions to global biodiversity and were one of the main reasons that Peter Scott created WWT in 1946.

They are part of the Northwest European flyway, which is an excellent example of a co-ordinated approach to flyway management, with several examples of impressive species recovery in recent decades.

However significant threats remain and some populations, including the Bewick's swan, are in sharp decline for reasons not yet fully understood.

### How

We will continue to investigate and lead recovery efforts for flyway species in decline, particularly Bewick's swan, Greenland white-fronted goose, taiga bean goose and European sea ducks, using them to pinpoint and illustrate threats on the flyway as a whole.

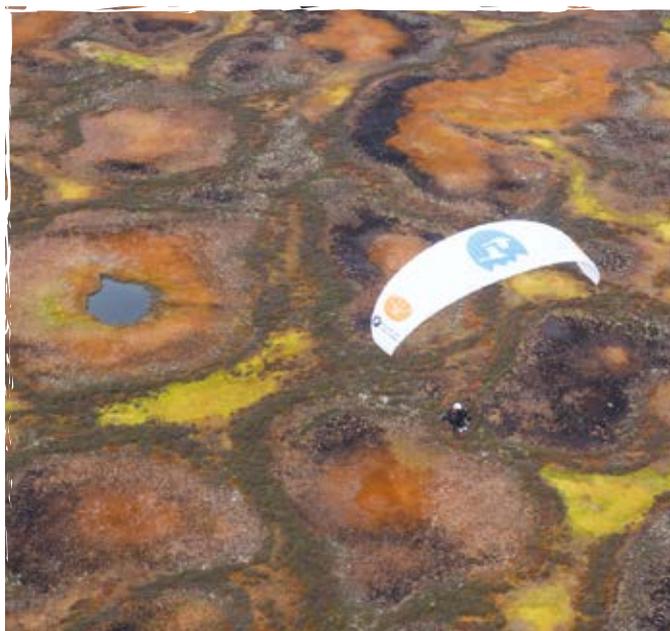
We will monitor the status of migratory waterbirds so we have an early warning system for developing problems. We will undertake research to understand threats to waterbirds including collisions with infrastructure, lead poisoning, wildlife disease, hunting and climate change and provide scientifically based solutions.

We will support our direct work through political advocacy for wetlands, working to strengthen the African Eurasian Waterbird Agreement (AEWA). We will develop our status as an International Organisation Partner (IOP) and champion the delivery of Ramsar's CEPA programme and, through other multilateral environmental agreements, support conservation action on the flyway.

### Case study:

#### Declining swans

Numbers of Bewick's swans have declined alarmingly over the last 20 years. By flying with Bewick's swans along their migration from northern Russia to the UK with a paramotor, the Flight of the Swans project engaged communities, conservationists, scientists and governments and galvanised action to halt the birds' decline.



## **International wetland centres and parks along priority global flyways have been developed and co-ordinated as a voice for wetland solutions.**

### *Why*

The concept of wetland centres as places designed and developed to engage a range of visitors with wetland nature, some of whom may not normally seek out wild spaces, was developed by WWT in our own national network.

The idea has been exported, with over 350 wetland centres now forming part of the Wetland Link International network. Collectively these places represent a potentially very strong voice for wetland conservation and wetland solutions.

### *How*

WWT Consulting has worked directly on the development of many international wetland centres, including in Hong Kong and China where over 800 wetland parks, many inspired by WWT wetland centres, are currently at planning stage.

We will continue to support development and provide advice for international wetland centres and parks. We will share best practice through global networks such as Wetland Link International and the World Wetland Network.



**Hong Kong Wetland Park, Hong Kong**

# DEVELOPING OUR ORGANISATION

To deliver our five year aims we need to focus on these key areas in how we work.

## **A We will be strategic, but remain adaptable and pragmatic**

While it is important to be strategic in our approach, we also have to be realistic about a changing world and remain adaptable and pragmatic towards new opportunities.

## **B We will value our people and provide a culture that supports them in doing their jobs well**

The passion and expertise of our staff and volunteers is critical to delivering our conservation aims. We will support our people by investing in training and development, improving communication and ensuring our teams feel involved and valued.

We will build a culture of passion for wetland conservation with a focus on delivering our conservation aims, mutual support between teams across the organisation and putting our visitors and supporters first.

## **C We will grow our support**

We cannot achieve our conservation aims without growing our support. Our supporters provide our funding, give time as volunteers and become a collective voice for wetland solutions.

We will reach out to more supporters via our wetlands, our communications, and through our conservation actions in the UK and internationally.

We will develop and adapt our messages to make sure all our supporters and audiences see us as relevant to them, encouraging higher visitation and income from our wetlands and nurturing support for all our conservation actions.

## **D We will use our resources wisely**

We will use our financial and people resources with care in order to achieve the most effective outcomes. We will ensure our budgetary, planning and management tools efficiently support our work.

In all decisions and investments we will carefully consider the costs and benefits, not just financially. We will monitor our performance against our aims to ensure we maximise our achievements for conservation.

## **E We will assess our performance**

We will review the effectiveness of our work in achieving change for wetlands. We will build a more detailed understanding of how we have influenced change and what we can do to improve our impact further.

## **F We will ensure our work considers and minimises our impact on all natural resources, but particularly on water**

We will continue to develop practical and achievable ways of working that reduce our impact on natural resources. We will continue to focus on using water wisely across WWT and applying practical solutions to management of water that benefits wetlands. We will mitigate our climate change impacts and adapt our operations to a changing climate. We will seek to inspire and inform others.



A world where healthy wetland  
nature thrives and enriches lives

Front cover images:  
WWT Slimbridge Wetland Centre (top)  
WWT Steart Marshes (bottom)