

Our impact 2023/24

UNLOCKING THE POWER OF WETLANDS





A YEAR OF MANY SUCCESSES

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In a year filled with stories of climate breakdown, nature in crisis and deteriorating health and wellbeing, WWT has been on a mission. In line with our new strategy and our bolder voice, we've been telling the world that wetlands offer a powerful solution to our biggest challenges.

These carbon sinking, flood buffering, water purifying, mood lifting, nature boosting places are incredible. But wetlands are often undervalued. Thanks to incredible support from our partners, donors, staff, volunteers and members, it's been a year of many successes.

We've made great strides, nearly doubling the wetlands we manage with the addition of the 2,600-hectare Bridgewater Bay National Nature Reserve.

At WWT Caerlaverock, we've created rich wildlife habitats to support species including the rare natterjack toad. Aviva recognised us as wetland restoration experts and donated £21 million to support our efforts restoring saltmarsh for people and communities, and to fund vital research on their benefits for nature and climate.

We're boosting wildlife populations, from hand-rearing black-tailed godwits at Welney, to restoring wet grasslands for sarus cranes in Cambodia.

Our movement of people taking action for wetlands is growing too. 20,000 people have backed our calls to restore more wetlands and nearly 800,000 visitors have experienced the magic of our sites. We're also inspiring the next generation of nature lovers - we welcomed over 50 thousand young learners to our sites this year.

I hope you enjoy reading about our many successes. These achievements were made possible thanks to the strength of our partnerships and the generous support and passion of people like you.

Sarah Fowler, **WWT Chief Executive**


KEY ACHIEVEMENTS


 nearly
800K
visitors to our sites


51K
learners welcomed to our sites

100% 
increase in amount of
wetlands we manage

20K 
people back our call to
restore more wetlands

45K 
listeners tune into
Waterlands podcast

1.5M 
reached by mini wetlands campaign

PROTECTING LIFE-GIVING WETLANDS

Bridgewater Bay NNR

WETTER FOR WADERS

We nearly doubled the total area of land we manage for nature.

We have taken over the management of Bridgewater Bay National Nature Reserve (NNR), which borders our site at WWT Steart Marshes. The additional 2,600 hectares of mud, sandflats, reedbeds, saltmarsh and wet grasslands provide internationally important feeding and roosting sites for many migratory waterbirds.

It's also the UK's largest moulting ground for shelduck, with 4,000 flocking to the site every year before migrating eastwards.

“ Natural England has worked with WWT to transfer the management of Bridgewater Bay to them. Given WWT's nearby site base and fantastic local team, they are best placed to give the reserve the on-site presence and close attention it deserves.

Natural England

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RESTORING PRECIOUS WETLANDS

We play a leading role accelerating the pace of wetland restoration across the UK. Over the past year we have been building a better, healthier and more connected network of wildlife-rich wetland landscapes.

WILDER, WETTER CAERLAVEROCK

Work to restore wetlands for nature begins at WWT Caerlaverock as part of a three-year project.



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Rare natterjack toads will benefit from six new ponds

“

I sense nature's big seal of approval. I've already seen an increase in wildlife using the area. There's plenty still to do, but it's immensely rewarding to see we're heading in the right direction.

Jake Goodwin, Project Officer, WWT

For hundreds of years, farming the land around our site at WWT Caerlaverock meant trying to get water off the land as fast as possible. Now, thanks to funding from the Scottish Government's Nature Restoration Fund, we're restoring wetlands and welcoming water and nature back. The diggers have been busy creating scrapes and channels to hold onto water and we've been replacing intensive agriculture with more sustainable, wildlife friendly, low-impact grazing. We're also creating six new breeding ponds to boost our population of rare natterjack toads.

And nature's already bouncing back. The wetter land is attracting birds such as snipe and woodcock. Shelduck have also been seen using the pools, along with more dragonflies and damselflies.

HELPING NATURE THRIVE

We are world leaders in bringing species back from the brink. We combine passion with pioneering conservation techniques such as 'headstarting', to help wetland nature burst back to life.

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TRANSFORMING THE FUTURE FOR BLACK-TAILED GODWITS

We hatch a new generation of black-tailed godwits as part of a plan to boost the wild population with hand-reared birds.

As it stands there are fewer than 50 pairs of British black-tailed godwits left in the wild. Our work is crucial in helping the species survive as a breeding bird in the UK.

In a world first, we're establishing a captive breeding population of black-tailed godwits at WWT Slimbridge. We're also undertaking further headstarting at WWT Welney. We'll be supplying godwits for future re-introduction projects, so this endangered bird can be re-established in areas where it's become extinct.

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By establishing the world's first captive breeding population, we'll be giving black-tailed godwits the lifeline they need to survive, as our wetland restoration work ramps up around the UK.

William Costa, Project Manager and Lead Aviculturist, WWT

WORKING WITH COMMUNITIES TO PROTECT THE SARUS CRANE

We're securing Cambodia's wetlands in the Lower Mekong, providing more valuable wet grasslands where the sarus crane can forage.

“


We're achieving so much protecting, restoring and reviving these extraordinary places. And the results are clear. Better lives for farming and fishing communities, means more habitat for cranes and other wildlife.

Bunthary Srun, Technical Officer (Cambodia), WWT

The sarus crane
is the world's
tallest flying bird



Crane numbers
in Cambodia
have dropped **70%**
since 2014 to just 180 in 2023



Red jasmine rice farmers in Anlung Pring are planting beans as a secondary crop for the first time to enrich the soil between rice harvests.

3,500

**metre dyke
created to restore**

40 hectares of
wet grassland

The sarus crane has suffered a drastic decline in Cambodia. We're working with local communities to protect this magnificent bird, which reflects the overall condition of the wetlands and plays a key role in preserving their wider biodiversity.

We're restoring wet grassland where water chestnuts grow, which is the sarus crane's main food source.

We're also working with nearly 300 farmers to support a switch to a more sustainable rice. The red jasmine rice now being grown uses less pesticides and three times less water than other rice varieties.

Our work is helping protect future livelihoods for local communities and increasing climate resilience across the region.

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A young boy with short brown hair and a slight smile is looking directly at the camera. He is wearing a dark blue jacket with a fur-lined hood. He is surrounded by tall, dry, golden-brown grasses that are slightly out of focus. The background is a soft, blurred green, suggesting a natural outdoor setting.

INSPIRING A WORLD OF NATURE LOVERS

We believe the most effective way to save the natural world is to inspire people to fall in love with it. That's why we're creating a global community of dedicated conservationists and vocal nature lovers so that together we can restore wetlands and unlock their power.

TRAINING TOMORROW'S CONSERVATIONISTS

Pilot course attracts
350 applicants from
45 countries

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The Wetland Learning Hub will help in capacity building at every level for wetland conservationists, supporting the work of the Convention on Wetlands and bringing vital training to all.

Musonda Mumba, *Secretary General, Ramsar Convention on Wetlands*

We've launched the Wetland Learning Hub, a game-changing global training platform for wetland professionals.

WWT already offers wetland and wetland species advice to organisations and individuals around the world. But we want to go further and work with a wider range of partners.

This year we've launched our innovative Wetland Learning Hub – a dynamic digital platform designed to empower wetland professionals with the cutting edge knowledge and skills they need. Through this hub, we're expanding the global community of individuals actively engaged in wetland restoration.

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IGNITING A PASSION FOR NATURE

Our award-winning learning programme Generation Wild creates nature connections for thousands of children and families from disadvantaged schools.

'Awesome, 'outstanding' and 'hugely ambitious'. These are just some of the comments we received from judges at this year's BIAZA awards where Generation Wild was awarded Gold in the education category.

We're also celebrating the completion of 100,000 nature connection activities by children who have participated in the programme, as the project achieves significant growth.

“

Nature is for everyone. That's why we're so thrilled at the positive impact Generation Wild is continuing to have. Feedback has been glowing and points towards a significant improvement in mental wellbeing, as well as care and concern for nature.

Mark Stead, Head of Learning, WWT

100%

of teachers say they'd recommend **Generation Wild** to others

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MAKING THE CASE FOR SALTMARSH

Some of the most impactful wetland research in the world is taking place at WWT.

£21 MILLION BOOST FOR SALTMARSH RESEARCH AND RESTORATION

This donation is part of insurer Aviva's ambition to make the UK the most climate-ready large economy by 2030.

The money will support new research to demonstrate how saltmarshes can be restored and created at scale. It will also show the multiple benefits they can bring, in particular their ability to sequester carbon.

As we work towards our ambition of creating 100,000 hectares of new and restored wetlands in the UK by 2050, this research will provide a catalyst for further investment in saltmarsh creation to help combat climate change and reverse nature loss.

18K tonnes of organic carbon stored at WWT Steart Marshes in first four years

“

What I love about working at WWT is that we take all the data and findings from our research and surveys, and use it as a tool to drive change. This brings about more wetland restoration and creation.

Alys Laver, Steart Marshes Manager, WWT

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BUILDING A MOVEMENT

We want everyone to see wetlands like we do, as a solution to the climate, nature, and wellbeing crises and to be inspired to take action to save them.

CELEBRATING THE SMALL BUT MIGHTY MINI-WETLAND.

Our campaign this year focused on getting everyone busy in their backyards or places of work, creating tiny ponds, drainpipe wetlands or rain gardens. Why? Because mini-wetlands are one of the best ways to support nature. As well as taking practical action, the campaign helped us hit the milestone of 20,000 people signing our call to restore 100,000 hectares of wetlands in the UK.

1.5M reached

30 media articles

580K
people engaged via social

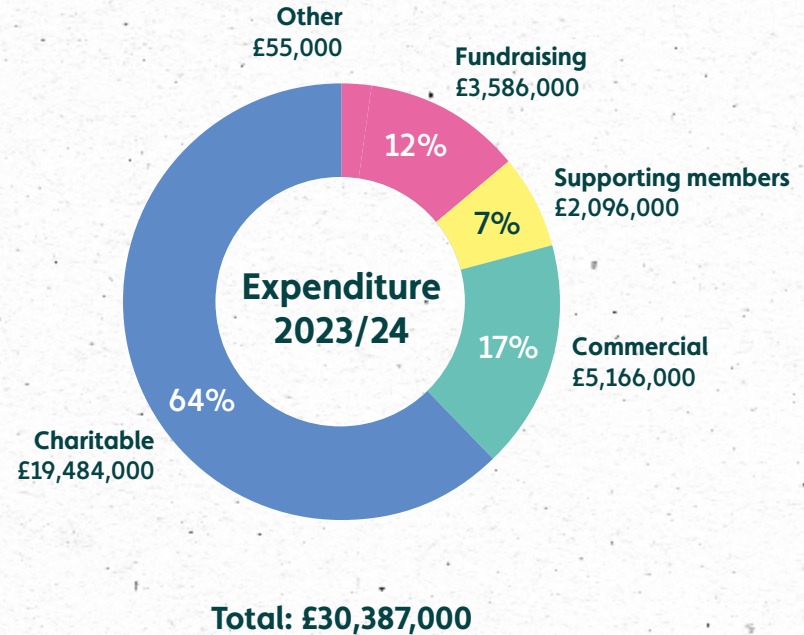
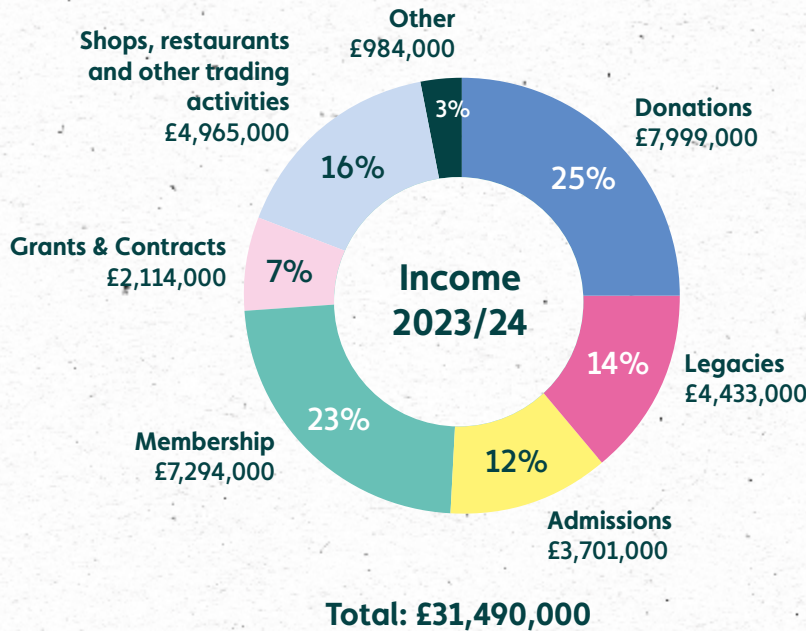
20K
pledges for Wetland Can!

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FINANCIAL INFORMATION 2023/24

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

Total income for the year was higher at £31.5m, an increase of £5.4m on the previous year's £26m. Total expenditure increased 6% to £30.4m from £28.7m in 2022/23.



WE'RE JUST GETTING STARTED

We have big ambitions. But it's only by working with people like you, who share our deep love for wetlands, that we'll be able to unlock the power of wetlands and help nature burst back to life. Because when wetlands flourish, all life will flourish.

If you want to be part of the incredible work we're doing, delivering hopeful solutions to meet today's challenges, please contact Peter Lee, Head of Philanthropy and Partnerships.

We look forward to working with you on the next chapter of our work, delivering a world where healthy wetlands thrive and enrich lives.

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Head of Philanthropy and Partnerships

We are the wetland restoration charity



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WWT
For wetlands. For life.