



Trustees' annual report and accounts 2022

Love **Essex** • Love **Wildlife**



Essex
Wildlife Trust

The registered name of the Charity is Essex Wildlife Trust Limited.
It is registered with the Charity Commission in England and Wales with the number 210065.

Members of the Board

The Trustees who served during the year and the dates of their most recent election or retirement were as follows:

S Balsler	Trustee	Re-elected	22 10 2022	C Joynson	Trustee	Re-elected	05 10 2019
G Duffield	Trustee	Re-elected	05 10 2019	T Kaime	Trustee	Re-elected	22 10 2022
M Hardy	Trustee	Re-Elected	22 10 2022	N Kingston	Trustee	Re-elected	22 10 2022
C Hawkins	Trustee	Elected	24 10 2020	E Simonsson	Trustee	Elected	24 10 2020
K Hazelhurst	Chair	Re-elected	05 10 2019	M Wall	Trustee	Elected	24 10 2020
R Holmes	Treasurer	Elected	24 10 2020	J Wren	Trustee	Elected	24 10 2020

Principal Officers of the Charity:

Chief Executive Officer: Dr A Impey
Company Secretary: F Hearn (resigned 30 03 22)

Advisers:

Auditors: Moore Kingston Smith LLP, Orbital House, 20 Eastern Road, Romford, Essex RM1 3PJ.
Bankers: Barclays Bank PLC, Barclays Business Centre, 40-41 High Street, Chelmsford, Essex CM1 1BE.
Independent Financial Advisors: Buzzacott Financial Planning Ltd, 130 Wood Street, London EC2V 6DL.
Investment Managers: Sarasin & Partners LLP, Juxon House, 100 St Paul's Churchyard, London EC4M 8BU.
Schroders Wealth Management, 12 Moorgate, London EC2R 6DA.
Solicitors: Ellisons, Headgate Court, Head Street, Colchester CO1 1NP.
VAT Advisors: Constable VAT Consultancy LLP, Manningtree Road, Dedham CO7 6BL.

Introduction to the report of the Board who are also the Trustees of Essex Wildlife Trust Limited

The Board have pleasure in presenting their report together with the audited financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2022. The Board have adopted the provisions of the Charities SORP (FRS 102) – Accounting and Reporting by Charities: 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 (effective 1 January 2015) in preparing the annual report and financial statements of the charity. The accounts have been prepared in accordance with the Companies Act 2006.



Report and consolidated financial statements

Year ended 31 December 2022
Published August 2023

Badger cover photo:
ondrejprosky - stock.adobe.com

Large blue:
Ross Hoddinott/2020VISION

Registered Office:

Essex Wildlife Trust
Abbotts Hall
Great Wigborough
Colchester
Essex CO5 7RZ

T 01621 862 960

E enquiries@essexwt.org.uk
www.essexwt.org.uk

Registered Charity No. 210065
Company Registered No. 638666
VAT Registered No. 945 7459 77



Essex
Wildlife Trust

Contents

Our objectives and activities	4
Public benefit statement	4
Strategic Description	4
Strategic report	5
CEO Overview	6
Protect	8
Our achievements in 2022	8
Our aims for 2023	15
Inspire	16
Our achievements in 2022	16
Our aims for 2023	23
Enable	24
Our achievements in 2022	24
Our aims for 2023	30
Strategic Achievements, Performance and Future Plans	31
Financial review	32
Risk management	37
Fundraising at Essex Wildlife Trust	38
Structure, governance and management	39
Relationship with the charity and related parties (including its subsidiaries)	41
Statement as to disclosure of information to auditors	42
Independent Auditors Report	43
Consolidated Statement of Financial Activities	46
Consolidated and Charity Balance Sheets	47
Consolidated Cash flow Statement	48
Notes to the consolidated financial statements	49

Our objectives and activities

Essex Wildlife Trust is protecting wildlife for the future and for the people of Essex and is required by charity and company law to act within the objects set out in its Memorandum and Articles of Association. These are shown below.

The objectives of the charity are:

- 1 For the benefit of the public, to advance, promote and further the conservation, maintenance and protection of:**
 - Wildlife and its habitats.
 - Places of natural beauty.
 - Places of zoological, botanical, geographical, historical, archaeological or scientific interest.
 - Features of landscape with geological, physiographical or amenity value in any ways that are charitable in law and in particular, but not exclusively, in ways that further biodiversity.

- 2 To advance the education of the public in:**
 - The principles and practice of sustainable development.
 - The principles and practice of biodiversity conservation.

Public benefit statement

The Trustees confirm that they have complied with the duty in section 4 of the Charities Act 2006 to have due regard to the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit, 'Charities and Public Benefit'. The Trustees refer to the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit when reviewing the Trust's aims and objectives, in planning future activities, and setting and developing Strategic Plans as they occur.

A strategic plan was agreed for the period 2020 to 2025 which builds on the work of the previous strategy. This has been further enhanced during early 2023, to align end dates with the wider Wildlife Trust targets and national targets, to 2030. The new strategic plan now covers the period to 2030.

Strategic Description

Since its inception in 1959, Essex Wildlife Trust has succeeded in considerably increasing the quantity and quality of the land it holds and manages as nature reserves, and through its Nature Discovery Centres continues to offer the public gateways to accessing our wonderful green spaces. Our premises are in the main freely open to the general public, the only exceptions being those reserves where particular care has to be taken due to health & safety concerns, or for specific species protection.

The Trust organises a wide programme of events with a variety of stakeholders such as local authorities, schools,

landowners, other organisations and the general public, these programmes will continue to have a long-term benefit to stakeholders.

Other beneficiaries of the work delivered by Essex Wildlife Trust include a team of over 1,500 volunteers who serve regularly in a variety of ways and who benefit from the skills training offered. The contribution of volunteers alongside the staff is fundamental to the success and efficient running of the Trust.

Essex Wildlife Trust relies on the huge contribution made by its staff and its team of over 1,500 volunteers who serve regularly in a variety of ways. The hard work of both these groups is fundamental for the success and efficient running of the Trust.

Like minded organisations and local authorities for whom the Trust manages sites or provides information also benefit.

The Trust caters at certain sites for the needs of people who have accessibility or other specific needs and one of the Trust's key objectives is to make more of our sites fully accessible, to ensure that nature truly is for everyone.

The strategic activities, aims and objectives of the Trust are reviewed every year by the Trustees, alongside budget setting.



Strategic report

The information throughout this document, including the Achievements and Performance, the Financial Review, the Risk Management Statement, and the Summary of Future Plans, forms the Strategic Report for the purpose of the Companies Act 2006.



Andrew Impey

Chief Executive Officer
Essex Wildlife Trust

It's been an extremely busy year for Essex Wildlife Trust: a year characterised by **transforming large parts of the organisation and laying foundations in other areas** in order to ensure the long-term health and impact of the Trust.

We completed **Phase I of the Leadership Review** by reforming and elevating our Strategic Leadership Team (SLT), bringing significant new expertise into the Trust in the appointment of a **Director of Conservation**, a **Director of Finance and Systems**, and a **Commercial Director**. Adding to our existing expertise of the **Director of People and Culture** and **Director of Engagement**.

We also embarked on **Phase II of the Leadership Review**, establishing the **Operational Leadership Team** (OLT) made up of new Heads of Department in key areas. OLT are already a tight-knit team of talented and high performing leaders, and recently led our **Staff Day** on 1 December, which was a fantastic event and developed significant leadership capital for OLT. They will help to create SLT capacity, enabling the Directors to operate at the right level to bring maximum value to the Trust.

We continued to embed our two **Higher Level Objectives** of '30 by 30' (30% of land and sea in Essex connected and protected for wildlife by 2030) and '1 in 4' (1 in 4 people taking action for wildlife in Essex by 2030) and will be prioritised a **refresh of the Strategic Plan 2020-25** early in 2023, having done the groundwork with select members of Board and OLT.

With Jeremy at the helm, the **scale and impact of our conservation work** will go from strength to strength in the coming years. The Conservation directorate has been restructured to enable more strategic focus on nature's recovery, growing our portfolio of marine work as part of our **Wilder Seas Strategy**, and establishing conservation evidence as an integral discipline for the future. This year was the second anniversary of our **Ecological Team** forming and they are helping to underpin all our work with a solid base of scientific data. Many projects delivered great things for wildlife, including **Greener Thames** with the RSPB, 40 hectares of improvement at **Blue House Farm**, 75 hectares of improvement at **Fobbing Marsh**, and an exciting new project to begin restoring **Warley Place**.

Our Nature Discovery Centres returned to normal levels of trading while also benefitting from a **year-long programme of improvement** spanning signage and interpretation, our retail offer, our food and beverage offer, look and feel, and the visitor experience. We also **reopened Bedfords Park**, which was a fantastic event.

Our education provision was reorganised and restructured into the **Wilder Learning Team**, which is already making waves. Their work is guided by the new **Engagement Strategy**, which also drives our **growing portfolio of Team Wilder community organising work**. Meanwhile, our pioneering **Nature Nursery** completed its first full year of operations and the feedback from parents has been incredible.

It was another good year for communications at the Trust, an area for which we are widely regarded as a national leader. The **Essex brand was adopted nationally**, which brought huge kudos to the Trust. We managed our best levels of engagement ever, and we achieved **many campaign successes**, which we hope you enjoy reading about.

There has been a significant amount of work under the umbrella of the **Digital Transformation Project** to introduce effective and efficient systems for the future. The **new compliance system, SmartLog**, which incorporates health and safety, has been successfully implemented, plus there is the **new finance system, Xledger**, went live at the start of 2023. Work has also started in 2022 on the introduction of a **new HR Information System**, and work will shortly commence on a **new CRM system**. Other major work included the re-auditing of our Environmental Management System that underpins the re-accreditation of our **Green Dragon Level 1**.

Culture is extremely important at the Trust and an area that we continue to develop. Some of the main developments this year have included a **Leadership Competency Framework** that will be fully embedded next year, significant investment in ensuring excellence in **Safeguarding**, new approaches to managing the **volunteer experience**, and a raft of work to maximise staff retention and position the Trust as an **employer of choice**, despite volatile job markets and worsening economic conditions.

The following sections summarise some of our **big achievements and challenges in 2022** in more detail, organised in line with the **Goals of our Strategic Plan**. However, it's worth noting that this report is merely a summary and most of the work is in addition to the business-as-usual job of managing over a hundred nature reserves and running the most visitor centres of any Wildlife Trust in the movement.

It is also worth noting that **the role of staff is implicit in many cases but cannot be overstated**. While members of SLT and OLT are mentioned by name, the real heroes and heroines are, in most cases, our wonderful staff and the incredible contribution from our army of volunteers.



December 2022

Protect

Our achievements in 2022

For all three '**Protect**' areas of the Essex Wildlife Trust **Strategic Plan**, there was a considerable amount of special project work achieved or progressed this year. In addition, the vital annual work programmes for the reserves continued with the aim of maintaining dynamic habitat management interventions to promote the diversity of wildlife on these special sites and, in many cases, like butterfly populations for example, ensure more resilience to the impacts of climate change.

The backdrop to all this work was a transformative change to the organisational structure of the conservation teams into a **new Conservation Directorate**, which began to take shape from September onwards. During this year there was also a significant turnover of conservation staff to which the team had to adapt. Both this new **Directorate transformation** and the **staff turnover** had significant impacts on remaining staff and required adjustments and some delays to ongoing plans. However, the level of achievement across the three goals reported here is a testament to the extraordinary dedication, hard work and adaptability of the Trust's conservation staff. The three goals against which work is reported this year are: **Goal 1** (Leading wildlife gain across the county), **Goal 2** (Maximising the conservation value of our land), and **Goal 3** (Championing key species).





Goal

1

Leading wildlife gain across the county



Ringed plover photo: Fergus Gill/2020VISION

In March, the first meeting of the **Essex Local Nature Partnership** was held, led by Essex County Council, with the Trust as the Partnership's **lead nature conservation organisation**. The Partnership agreed to endorse four key aims or targets, two of which closely match the Trust's Strategic Plan objectives, namely **1 in 4** people in Essex engaged with nature by 2030 and the **30 by 30 target**: 30% of land managed for nature conservation by 2030.

To achieve anything close to these targets will require a **transformation** of the way in which nature conservation is promoted and funded and the ways in which land is managed across the Essex countryside. To enable the Trust to respond to this rapidly changing policy environment, the new Conservation Directorate was formed during 2022, with **'three pillars' of activity** or function. The 'three pillars' are **Nature Reserves** and their **Natural Capital, Conservation Evidence** and **Nature Recovery**.

To lead wildlife gain across the County in a significant way, two new Heads of nature recovery were appointed during the latter half of the year. The previous Living Seas Coordinator was successfully promoted as the Trust's **Head of Marine & Coastal Recovery**, and previously the Living Landscapes Development Manager, as the Trust's **Head of Landscapes & Rivers Recovery**. This two-pronged approach to nature recovery ensures that Essex's internationally important marine and coastal environment will be covered and that there will be a doubling down on the efforts, that the Trust has been spear-heading, to recover the condition of Essex's rivers, whilst also ensuring that the new policy complexities and funding opportunities of **biodiversity net gain (BNG), nature-based solutions (NbS), ecosystem services**, and **natural capital** are fully embraced.

Under the **Local Nature Partnership**, new sub-groups are tackling key areas of work and the two key areas

addressing **wildlife gain** are the development of a **Local Nature Recovery Strategy**, with an associated biodiversity opportunities map, and an agreed and targeted approach to **biodiversity net gain** across the county. Both sub-groups involve officers of the Trust working to develop the strategies with partners from other nature conservation NGOs and also local authorities and statutory bodies.

Alongside all these new programmes of activity, a large amount of project work has also been progressing; continuing the momentum of the last few years on a wide variety of crucial nature conservation issues. During the year the **Wilder Seas Strategy** was completed and was published online in early 2023. The Strategy looks at how to engage people with these often neglected or unseen ecosystems, as well as ways of protecting the many vulnerable habitats, from oyster beds to saltmarshes.

The **Blackwater Partnership** continued to thrive, chaired and coordinated by Trust officers, with two well-attended meetings this year. The second of these meetings, which was both in-person and online was very productive with excellent presentations, which themselves generated new ideas for collaborations. This partnership has encouraged very productive interactions with a wide range of different organisations and specialists including from universities and the partnership has ensured that marine concerns are being integrated into other coastal considerations and the wider Blackwater landscape.

Key marine and coastal recovery projects have included **saltmarsh restoration, sea grass beds monitoring, Share Our Shores**, and the **Essex Native Oyster Restoration Initiative (ENORI)**. The Saltmarsh restoration work involving the use of coir rolls or, as they have been named, **saltmarsh sausages**, has now been reported with the University of Essex's results which look promising for this technique. From this,

a **toolkit** is being developed which will be shared with key practitioners – this provides recommendations for how to use them, lessons learnt and how to scale up in the future.

The **Sea Grass project** in Essex is the contribution to the national **ReMedies** project led by Natural England. In Essex, the Trust has been leading and coordinating a group of volunteers to monitor recreational issues around the seagrass beds on the **Blackwater and the Thames Estuaries**. The volunteers have made great efforts and collected large amounts of data on recreational impacts on these incredibly important sites of inter-tidal “meadows” or beds. This has provided a platform for future work.

Share Our Shores, protecting ground-nesting birds, was active with officers and volunteers roping off areas and erecting clear branded signage at Colne Point, Tollesbury Wick, and the RSPB's Old Hall Marshes. **Little Terns** didn't nest successfully on Trust reserves this year, but **Ringed Plovers** had a good breeding season at **Colne Point** which remains the most important site in Essex for beach-nesting birds.



Native oysters

Offshore, the **ENORI** project continued to extend the area of ‘culch’ – a special shell substrate to encourage juvenile native oyster recruitment – in the 1km square protected area in the Blackwater Estuary ‘box’. In addition, the first phase of the **Beneficial Use of Dredged Sediment (BuDS)** project has been completed – focusing on a selection of three sites all in the Blackwater Estuary, including Tollesbury Wick.

Inland, work continues to assess the details of the 400+ blockages in Essex rivers that were identified by the **Essex Fish Migration Road Map**. These blockages currently render our waterways a string of ‘linear lakes’ rather than free-flowing, dynamic habitats. This is an ambitious 10-year project, and this year, in addition

to the fieldwork to assess the issues at each site, one of these blockages was removed and replaced with a fish passage that allows free movement across the structure.

In addition, work continued restoring the freshwater habitats of **Roxwell Brook** and providing nature-based solutions. At **Cherry Orchard Country Park**, in Rochford, the Trust coordinated the restoration of the lake habitat as part of a bigger project.

The pressure of development remains very high in Essex. This required a lot of responses to important planning issues throughout the year, as well as contributions to some Local Plan consultations. Of the **Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs)**, the North Falls and Five Estuaries offshore windfarms, which will affect marine and inland habitats particularly across Tendring District, took up a great deal of time, with discussions continuing on the issues of mitigation and compensation.


The **Lower Thames Crossing** consultation began again in the autumn and contributions were made to a collaborative press release and position statement, with other wildlife trusts and environmental NGOs, on the current proposals. The Trust's Planning Coordinator, represented the Trust at an important planning appeal concerning a development near **Tiptree Heath** at which the use of the biodiversity metric was challenged. Annie has also continued to contribute to **The Wildlife Trust's National Planning Group** and a horizon scan for likely issues that may affect the Trust in the near future. Draft **Trust Position Statements** on some of these issues have been prepared in 2023.



Completed fish pass

Goal

2

Maximising
the conservation
value of our land


Sheep grazing at Tollesbury Wick nature reserve

To better understand the conservation value of our nature reserves it is vital to compile evidence for many components of the sites, including habitat condition, the trends in the populations of key species and the range of natural variation in the composition and structure of vegetation and other communities of species. With the second field season of the **Ecological Monitoring Project** completed in 2022, the importance of some of the Trust's reserves to the whole of Essex is becoming more apparent.

Wrabness, for example, despite its relatively small size, has become the most important site in the county for the endangered **Turtle Dove** with counts of up to 10 birds on the reserve in spring 2022. Fingringhoe, in the meantime, remains Essex's most important refuge for **Nightingales** with 20 singing males recorded this year. The long-term survival of these species in the UK is dependent on many factors, but without key protected sites like **Fingringhoe** and **Wrabness**, where significant numbers allow successful pairing and breeding, both species might already have disappeared entirely from Essex. The Trust's reserves remain places from where nature can recover and so maximising their value is of the utmost importance, whilst seeking wildlife gains across the county.

In addition to bird surveys, the **Ecological Monitoring Project** is also covering 11 other modules of survey and monitoring for the nature reserves. These include rapid grassland assessments, woodland habitat condition, deer impacts measurement and butterfly surveys. This compilation of monitoring data from year to year will now be consolidated and further refined within a new section of the Conservation Directorate, **Conservation Evidence**, that was set up during the year, with the appointment of a new **Head of Conservation Evidence** in October. They will work with the Ecology and GIS teams to develop innovative research and survey techniques. The new section will also aim to better manage our databases and to begin to use data more effectively, both within and outside our

nature reserves, to influence the way land is managed for nature and to determine priorities for nature conservation in our rapidly changing environment.

In addition to planning for the future, a significant amount of **transformational land management work** was enacted during 2022 across the **internationally important grazing marshes** within the Trust's coastal reserves. Several multi-faceted projects are in progress with much of the work already achieved during 2022 and the rest was completed March 2023. In total, more than **215 hectares** of this very rare wet grassland habitat will be restored or enhanced for wildlife.

At **Blue House Farm**, a major project worth over £320,000 has been completed this year, funded by a **Biffa Award Partnership Grant** and **Essex & Suffolk Water's Branch Out Priority Habitats Scheme**. This complex project, across **40 hectares** of these River Crouch marshes, involved the installation of a better infrastructure to manage and retain freshwater across the grazing marshes, the creation of **new wetland scrapes and foot-drains** with anti-predator fencing around them to encourage breeding waders, especially **Lapwings** and **Redshank**, and the improvement of the grassland sward for over-wintering **Brent Geese**.

Supported through the **National Lottery Heritage Fund** and working with the RSPB, the £250,000 secured in 2021 for the Trust's coastal reserves under the flagship **Greener Thames Project**, this year paid for the clearing of **over 6.5km** of old foot-drains and low-ways at **Howlands Marsh** and **Lower Rappits** and a new infrastructure of tracks and anti-predator fencing at **Tollesbury Wick**, as well as some new machinery to help manage these important grasslands. As with the **Blue House Farm** project, this work should enhance wet grassland habitats for breeding waders and the invertebrates on which they feed.

Fobbing Marshes reserve also benefited from this

Greener Thames Project but, in addition, another big project, this time funded by the **Water Environment Improvement Fund (WEIF)**, is getting underway to raise water levels and store more freshwater over **75 hectares** of this important Thameside site, again for the benefit of waders and waterfowl. With greenspace at a premium for wildlife along the north Thames coastline, sites like Fobbing and the adjacent RSPB reserve at Bowers Marsh are becoming increasingly important for south Essex's wildlife. Freshwater is also an increasingly scarce resource and being able to hold onto autumn and winter rainfall is now critical to provide the conditions suitable for both wintering and breeding birds here.

Lapwing: Elliott Neep



Access to these wildlife-rich green spaces, without disturbance to the birdlife, is also vital for people given the limited accessible open space along the industrialised north Thames coastline. At **Fobbing**, the infrastructure for a new section of the **National Coastal Path** was installed, and the national pathway was opened during the summer around our Fobbing Marshes reserve and further along the Thames to Southend. Another Thames Estuary Trust reserve, **Two Tree Island**, became the focus for the celebratory opening in July, by the **Minister of State, Lord Blencathra**, of this length of the national trail, with the Trust hosting the event and Trust staff providing guided tours of the site for the guests.

Still on Thameside and following the **Land of the Fanns** project completion, the progress with improving the habitats at **Oliver Road Lagoons** and maintaining their extraordinary range of wildlife, from the county's only regularly flowering and stunningly beautiful **Marsh Helleborines** through to the exceptionally rare **Distinguished Jumping Spider**, continued apace with weekly volunteer work parties. A **Bioblitz** in June led by the Area Officers and Trust ecologists, did not manage to record the rare spider this year but showed the site's value with a huge range of other invertebrates recorded. Later in the autumn, after repairs to the tidal gates, the lagoon was finally re-opened to the tides after several years, further enhancing the habitat for wintering birdlife feeding on the muddy margins of the lagoon. **Volunteer work parties**, with the exceptional efforts of the Trust's **Volunteer Wardens** supported by **Area Officers** coordinating hands-on

conservation work across tens of Trust reserves, again achieved huge amounts of work this year. The range of work covered coppicing at **Copperas, Shadwell and West Woods**, managing **Heath Fritillary** habitats at **Pound Wood** and **Belfairs Nature Discovery Centre**, enhancing Water Vole habitats and cattle checking at **Sawbridgeworth Marsh**, haymaking and bramble clearance at **Gunners Park** and managing the extensive and critical infrastructure of fencing, pathways, boardwalks, bridges, bird hides and water control structures across the Trust's landholdings.

The exceptional work of one group of volunteers, the **Warley Place Nature Reserve Volunteer team**, was recognised by the **2022 BBC Essex Make A Difference Environmental Award** in November. Warley Place also saw the beginning of an out-of-the-ordinary restoration project for the Trust, Phase 1 was completed early in 2023. The project, funded in its different parts by **National Highways and Countryside Stewardship grants**, centres on the restoration of the built, rather than the natural, heritage of this lovely 10-hectare reserve made famous by the celebrated horticulturalist and plants-woman, **Ellen Willmott** of **Warley Place**. The work has, so far, involved the painstaking reconstruction of the ha-ha, a large section of the walls of the walled garden and the rebuild of the imposing roadside boundary wall. All this heritage and environmental conservation activity coincided with, and was celebrated at, an event on the anniversary of Ellen Willmott's birthday in August, sponsored by Essex Gardens Trust as part of the **Essex Women's Commemoration Project (EWCP)**, at which a **commemoration plaque** was unveiled by **Mrs Jennifer Tolhurst, His Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Essex**.



Other significant works involved several kilometres of new fencing at two nationally important grassland nature reserves, **Roding Valley** and **Langdon Ridge Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)**, under their respective Countryside Stewardship agreements. This fencing is essential to allow grazing across these grasslands to help maintain their exceptional floral and insect diversity.

Goal

3

Championing
key species

Beaver: WildMedia - stock.adobe.com

Beavers have been making news nationally throughout the year, with projects highlighted in the media across the UK, especially in the light of the UK Government's change in **Schedule 2 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species regulations 2017**, which protects the animals from persecution and their activities from damage, with the aim of allowing room for this keystone species to naturalise in the wider environment. This provides important context for the level of achievement of the Trust's Wilder Rivers Team, who have been part of a long-running partnership with **Spains Hall Estate** and others that has successfully introduced Beavers to this part of Essex. In June, Spains Hall Estate and this partnership, including Essex Wildlife Trust, received the prestigious **CIEEM Award for Best Practice – Small Scale Nature Conservation** in 2022.



Water vole: bridgephotography - stock.adobe.com

On the freshwater theme, the Trust's advisory and project work on **Water Voles** continues and preparations for mitigation management, control of mink and new habitat creation ahead of any potential **Lower Thames Crossing** were renewed, as the proposals for this huge infrastructure project began to be further developed following a hiatus during the Covid lockdowns. The Trust's important **Action for Insects** umbrella project continued into its second year with a renewal

of the **Bugs Matter** survey work to gather more data. This data is vital for differentiating declines in insect species from their natural year-to-year fluctuations in numbers. In addition, the **Big Wild Seed Sow** was also launched for a second summer and over **9,000 packets of wildflower seeds** were distributed to families across Essex this year, multiplying the reach of, and engagement with, this project even further and demonstrating the appetite for people to do something positive for nature.



Man orchids

Finally, on the wildflower theme, another significant collaboration took place at Chafford Gorges. The Reserve warden, worked with scientists from the **Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew** to help them find plants and potential locations to allow sampling of mycorrhizal fungi from the roots of rare **man orchids** to allow this species to be lab-grown, with a view to **future re-establishments** of this species at Chafford and elsewhere to boost the natural populations.

All these achievements for species were above and beyond our 'business-as-usual' activities for the species living within our nature reserves (see Goal 2 for more on these).

Our aims for 2023

With the new **Conservation Directorate** now in place, one of the main aims for early 2023 is to strengthen the teams with a series of recruitments to new and vacant posts across all of the 'three pillars' of activity and all four Sections within the Directorate. The **Marine & Coastal Team** has been expanded in early 2023 and a **GIS & Data Manager** will be recruited to advance the work of the Conservation Evidence Section. For the **Nature Reserves & Natural Capital Section** ongoing recruitment for key positions in 2023, includes the **Head of Section** and one new **Reserves Manager**.

Biodiversity Net Gain will become a major focus for activity and will build on the excellent collaborative project work, working with **Natural England** on the **biodiversity credit pilot scheme** at Abbots Hall.

Work with the **Local Nature Partnership** will continue to increase in importance and the production of **Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)**, and its opportunities map, will require considerable effort to meet the UK Government deadline of October 2023. Ongoing consultation with stakeholders on a version of the LNRS opportunities map and target zones has been continued in 2023 and there will be a requirement during the summer to consult the wider public too.

One off-shoot of the **Blackwater Partnership** approach, described under Goal 1, has been the developing alliance between **Natural England, RSPB, National Trust** and **Essex Wildlife Trust** to ensure a coordinated focus on future Blackwater conservation projects. One particular focus for development for the first half of 2023 has been the consideration of a **Landscape Recovery** application for development funding under Defra's new **Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS)**. This will aim to encompass land both behind and beyond the seawall, including grassland and saltmarshes.

The Landscape & Rivers Recovery Section will be looking to engage with stakeholders and partners on the key themes of **farming and soil**, and consider how best to respond to three key issues:

- Regenerative farming
- Integrated pest management
- More sophisticated water management

Along the coast one of the key priorities will be to make further progress with developing the **Beneficial Use of Dredged Sediments Project** (see more under Goal 1) in the Blackwater, possibly tying this in with the Landscape Recovery Scheme.

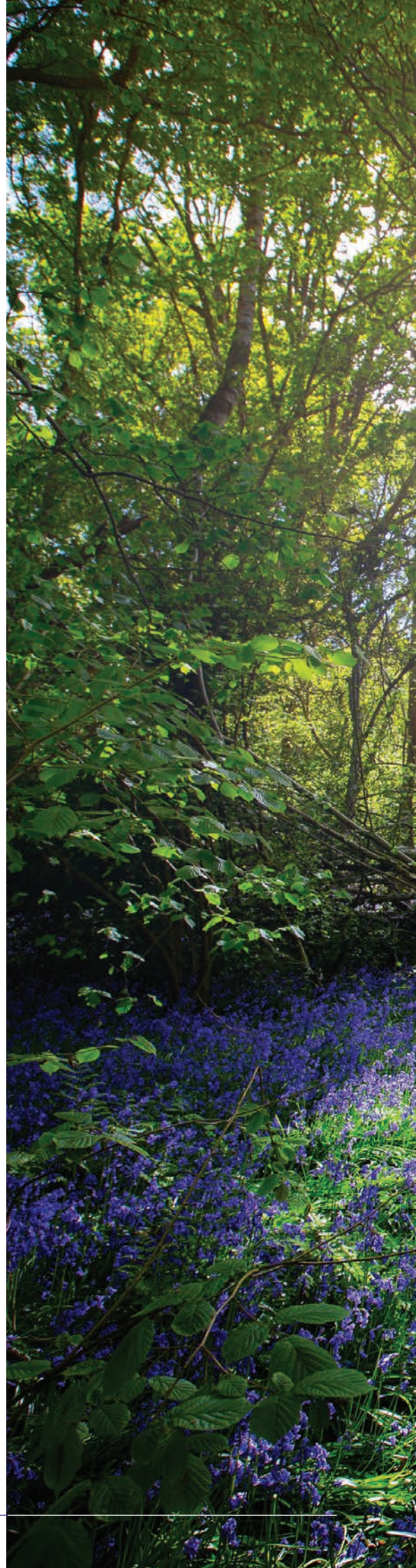
On our nature reserves, the **Ecological (Reserves) Monitoring Programme** will be continued and expanded, with dialogue between the Conservation Evidence and the Nature Reserves & Natural Capital Sections on priority setting. In particular, a new **saltmarsh condition assessment tool**, using remote sensing, digital mapping and the use of drones is to be developed. This will help with surveys to understand the reason for losses of this extremely important habitat and crucial carbon store.

On the **nature reserves**, the **Greener Thames** Project has been completed in the first part of 2023 and begin planning the legacy projects has begun to ensure the momentum is not lost for the enhancement and monitoring of these coastal habitats. As the **Nature Reserves & Natural Capital** section begins to grow through recruitment, the further development and enactment of the **Grazing Strategy** (approved by Board in 2021) will get underway and the grazing programme for the Trust's exceptional grasslands will begin. Several capital works under **Countryside Stewardship Agreements** will also be undertaken, including at **Lower Raypits** and **Shadwell Wood reserves**.

Inspire

Our achievements in 2022

The start of 2022 was challenging in terms of visitor numbers slowly returning to our NDCs, and recruitment of staff put pressure on our ability to fully reopen. The newly restructured Community Engagement Team is delivering against its Engagement Strategy and is already creating valuable community links through new and existing partnerships. Growing our wildlife supporters through the valuable network of 40K members remains an important source of not only income, but also of communication links to the community we work in.

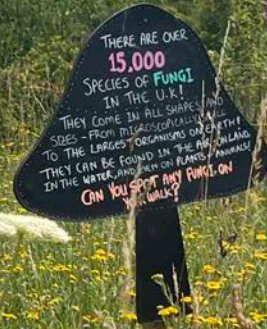




Goal

4

Creating places of wonder



Guerrilla signage at Abberton Reservoir Nature Discovery Park

The new **Head of Visitor Attractions** joined in September and has operational oversight of our Nature Discovery Centres.

The priority for the NDCs was to **return to a business-as-usual position**. However, the impact of the pandemic was still very noticeable. We were necessarily cautious in our approach to our customers, we operated with a reduced number of volunteers, and we experienced higher levels of staff turnover as many colleagues left the hospitality industry. The NDC team have worked hard to successfully return our NDCs to a solid footing.

The **number of vacancies was extremely high** at the start of the year. Bedfords Park continued to be closed and other NDCs were also at risk of closure. The introduction of a more agile recruitment process and re-benchmarking of key salaries helped to reverse this position, with very few vacancies in our NDCs by the end of 2022. **Bedfords Park** was refurbished, re-staffed, and re-opened in June, and visitor numbers have grown throughout the second half of the year.

Refurbishment also took place at **Abberton**, where the opening up of the former education room now provides an additional 30 covers. **Fingringhoe** and **Belfairs** were also fully re-decorated, while **Hanningfield** is in progress. Our **Retail** range continued to improve, and our displays have been significantly enhanced at many NDCs.

Our **Food & Beverage** offer was reduced during Covid, but this has now expanded to include a varied lunch menu and more. We have introduced **new equipment** to enable faster service without staff requiring significant training. With staffing issues resolved, **Langdon** launched its broader menu in time for its long-awaited official opening by the Mayor of Basildon, which was a great occasion.

In terms of performance measures, **trading broadly returned to 2019 levels** and **visitor numbers reached 1 million** by the end of the year.

A key workstream in making our NDCs and nature reserves 'places of wonder' is the **signage and interpretation project**. This year has seen more progress than any previous year.

WP1 (Work Package 1) focuses on welcoming visitors and covers everything from the roadside to the 'front door'. Installations of all the WP1 signage has been completed at Fingringhoe, Hanningfield, Thameside, and Ingrebourne (Abberton and Langdon were completed in 2021). Furthermore, the full designs for Bedfords Park and the Naze have been signed off by respective Local Authorities and installations were completed in early 2023. WP1 (along with WP3) have also been completed at Wrabness and Great Holland Pits as part of the **Tendring Loves Conservation** (TLC) project.

WP2 (Work Package 2) focuses on the inside of centres. Work has now commenced on this work package with a site review completed at Abberton.

WP3 (Work Package 3) focuses on the fixed signage, waymarking, and interpretation at reserves, including reserves that are part of Nature Discovery Parks (NDPs). Sitemaps, themed trails, and directional signage have been installed at Fingringhoe, Hanningfield and Abberton. Orders have been placed for Thameside and installation was completed in early 2023. New interpretation lecterns have been installed at Hanningfield.

Finally, **WP4** (Work Package 4) covers 'guerrilla signage', i.e. temporary and seasonal signage. In July, a workshop was held for a group of **Guerrilla Signage Champions**, and all NDCs now have A-frames and other guerrilla items. Fantastic examples are available at Abberton.

Essex Wildlife Trust



Welcome to Hanningfield Reservoir Nature Discovery Park

Welcome to Hanningfield Reservoir Nature Discovery Park. Our trails take you through ancient woodland, with wildlife hides offering astounding views over the 352 hectare reservoir.

There are three circular trails around the reserve. **Well Wood** takes you to RAWL hide, across the pond boardwalk where dragonflies zoom by, past historic oak trees and through an ancient hornbeam coppice. In spring, bluebells carpet the woodland floor, while woodpeckers nest in the tree trunks. **Hawks Wood** is lined by towering foxgloves and delicate wood melick. Look for colonies of wood ants scuttling across their impressive nests, and large bracket fungi growing on birch. For family fun follow the much-loved **The Wind in the Willows Trail**.

For recommendations, rest, refreshment, and retail therapy visit us at the Nature Discovery Centre.

Help us keep Hanningfield special by becoming a member of Essex Wildlife Trust today.

Love Essex • Love Wildlife



Key	
Information	Accession wildlife hide
Food and Drink	Resting gate
Shop	Public area
Toilet	Play area
Parking	Fishing
Amusement parking	Hangar
Wildlife table	Support bench
	The Wind in the Willows Trail
	Well Wood Trail
	Hawks Wood Trail



Walking distance
0 to 7
8 to 15
16 to 25

For help with planning your route please talk to one of our friendly team.



Essex Wildlife Trust

We are the county's **leading conservation charity**, committed to **protecting wildlife** and inspiring a lifelong **love of nature**.

Our climate is in crisis and **nature needs our help**. **Together** we can protect the future. **Join us.**



Essex Wildlife Trust

www.essexwt.org.uk

Goal 5

Inspiring a lifelong love of nature



Nature Nursery

The **Head of Community Engagement** joined the Trust in August, with a background in both secondary school teaching (as Head of Applied Science, teaching up to A-Level) and aquatic toxicology research. This post will oversee three areas: (1) **Wilder Learning** (e.g. formal and informal education and learning based outdoors); (2) the **Nature Nursery**; and (3) **Wilder Communities**, which includes our growing projects based on the 'community organising' / Team Wilder ethos. Jen's remit also includes **Local Groups**.

It's been a notable year for **Wilder Learning**. We run several flagship education programmes across the county, including **Nature Tots**, **Forest School**, **Wilder Schools** (i.e. schools either hosting or visiting us), and **Accredited Forest School Training**. In addition, we also have the online '**Wild Living Programme**' to make nature-related education as accessible as possible.

We are fortunate enough to have (to the best of our knowledge) the **largest county-based outdoor learning team in the UK**. However, it was evident towards the end of 2021 when the Director of Engagement took over the remit that team morale was low, leadership was lacking, and the structure was no longer fit for purpose. The first **quarter of 2022 was therefore spent redesigning the Wilder Learning Team**, changing the management post and postholder, developing the culture and expertise, and rebuilding provision after two years of Covid.

The department is now organised into three teams, covering North Essex, Mid Essex, and South Essex, each managing education provision at several Nature Discovery Centres, and is led by **the Wilder Learning Manager**, a very experienced teacher and outdoor practitioner. The team are settled (retention is very good), expanding (each team has a Wilder Learning Intern), high performing, are more engaged with RSWT and neighbouring Wildlife Trusts, and are **leading outdoor education nationally** in some areas.

In November, Jen delivered an extended session to the national **The Wildlife Trusts Education and Learning Network (ELN)** on **behaviour management** with the Chair of the ELN. We were the only Wildlife Trust to do so.

A big focus this year has been on measuring impact. Following the introduction of the **Engagement Strategy 2022-30** in May, all provision has been surveyed for feedback, with data collected in line with the four pillars of the Engagement Strategy: **Access, Experience, Connection, and Action**. Figures show that, in 2022: (i) in the region of **26,000 people accessed our Wilder Learning programmes** from a broad range of backgrounds (NB. these are individuals; the number of interactions would be significantly higher); (ii) **25,500 people had a great experience**; (iii) around **17,000 people felt more connected to nature as a result**, using standard measures of nature connectedness; and (iv) **15,000 people took (or plan to take) action** as a consequence. Extrapolated to the end of 2030, these statistics suggest that the Wilder Learning Team, alone, would contribute around **25% of the county's target of 1 in 4 people in Essex taking action** for wildlife by 2030.



Nature Tot: Adrian Clarke

2022, not least the final year of **Tendring Loves Conservation (TLC)**, which is a two-year project which focuses on community engagement and local site improvements in areas of multiple deprivation in Essex, funded by the **National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF)**.



Urban pond creation: Penny Dixie

Having opened in November 2021, our pioneering **Nature Nursery** recently completed **a full year of operations** as the Trust's first Ofsted-registered, entirely outdoor nursery, offering inspiring and affordable childcare and education for pre-schoolers based on **'learning through nature'**. The long-term ambition is to have multiple Nature Nurseries across the county, but we also want to inspire the sector with an alternative model for preschool childcare and education. The Nursery currently has 32 children attending, and our 2023 budget allows for more staff in order to increase the number of children and achieve a commercial steady state. Most importantly, the **feedback from parents and carers has been outstanding** and a joy to hear.

The Nature Nursery is led by the **Nature Nursery Manager**. The first full year of operation was a big success, with all inspections excellent, including a 5* Environmental Health Office audit, and extremely positive inspections by Essex County Council, Safer Food Scores, and our independent Speech and Language Advisor (unfortunately none of these inspections give a specific rating). The team have also been successful in achieving the **Millie's Mark Accreditation** for excellence in paediatric First Aid and child health and wellbeing. The spring saw the establishment of the **Management Committee** to ensure the good governance of the Nature Nursery, the summer saw our first **'graduation'** which was extremely emotional for many, and the autumn saw the development of our **Parents and Carers Forum**. The Nursery has subsequently been inspected, in mid 2023 and received an "Outstanding" rating, a true reflection of the amazing work the whole Nursery Team deliver.

The **Wilder Communities Team**, which is the third arm of activity in the community engagement department, was launched in the summer of 2022. The Wilder Communities portfolio currently covers three projects: (i) **Urban Wildlife Champions** which focuses on supporting proactive individuals in local communities (there are now 21 live projects and many more Champions); (ii) **Wilder Towns, Wilder Villages**, which focuses on supporting town and parish councils (we now have 30 councils signed up and 14 'work agreements'); and (iii) the NLHF-funded **Nextdoor Nature** project, which is a national two-year project that focuses on local communities at the grassroots level. We currently have **two externally funded fixed-term-contract members of the team for Nextdoor Nature**, working specifically in Clacton, Jaywick, Basildon, and Thurrock. The Wilder Communities Team also run a comprehensive programme of **workshops and webinars to support local communities** that are free to access.

We have also been working more closely with **Local Groups** this year to develop a **new Constitution and a list of priorities for 2023**.



Photo: Tom Marshall

Goal 6

Growing wildlife supporters



Nature Neighbours hedgehog mural

The **Head of Fundraising** joined the Trust in April with a wealth of experience and leads the new Fundraising department which brings together both Fundraising and Membership.

Despite the cost-of-living crisis and economic uncertainty, we have retained our **membership base of 40,000**, which has been no mean feat, continuing the recovery from the 2020 dip caused by Covid. We have also run two main appeals: the **Green Match Fund** and **Save our Species**, the latter of which is currently ongoing.

Our **Corporate Membership Scheme** continued to play its part in growing our supporter base, with around **380 members at the close of the year**. Several companies also contributed directly to our projects or to general funds, through fundraising, sponsorship, and volunteering. In addition, the **role of NDCs in growing wildlife supporters** cannot be overstated, with a million visitors forecast for 2022, as noted.

It was **another good year for communications and campaigning**, an area that is led by the **Head of Communications**. In January, we launched the **new nature reserves guide, 'Places of Wonder'**, which is available to members as an exclusive membership benefit and is the first time the old reserves guide has been updated since 2013. We now have a wonderful publication that is more of a 'member's handbook' and can be updated annually, print-run permitting. Meanwhile, **our brand 'went national'**, with the Wildlife Trusts movement adopting our logo and visual identity. A huge achievement and something for the Trust to be incredibly proud of.

The improved brand profile may have contributed to some significant hikes in our communications stats: our print stories alone reached **8.2 million readers** (our online readership would no doubt more than double this figure); we now have **70,000 followers on our primary social accounts** (this does not include our many secondary accounts, which represent thousands more followers); and we have **46,000 regular recipients of Wild News** on our mailing list. We also produced

season 2 of the popular **Wildlife Explorer** podcast, which ranks among the **top 15% of podcasts on Spotify** and was heard in 15 different countries this year. The Communications Team have done a fantastic job in securing several new regular columns too, including in **Essex Life Magazine**.

It was our first full year of having a **campaigning function** in the team, and the level and range of activity shows it. We now have **11,000 local campaigners** who receive and act on our regular communications. We led the **Essex BioBlitz** campaign in partnership with the **University of Essex**, encouraging the people of Essex to record wildflower sightings. Our aim was to secure 5,000 records. In total, we **achieved more than 15,000 records**, making the BioBlitz the **largest citizen science project in Essex** (ever, we think). This year's **Big Wild Seed Sow** wasn't far behind: the public picked up **9,000 packs of wildflower seeds** from our centres and donated £2,000.

The Big Wild Seed Sow is part of our overarching multi-year **Actions for Insects** campaign, which also saw **734 people writing to their local MPs** as part of our **No to Neonics** campaign, while over 300 car journeys were tracked as part of the **Bugs Matter** campaign. Other notable campaigns included **rights for beavers, saying no to peat** (which led to a ban from 2024, although we are still campaigning to get this introduced sooner), a huge display of our **Annual Photography Competition** finalists at High Chelmer, and another great year for **30 Days Wild**.

It was also a good year for our **Wildlife Webcams**, which attract a large international audience and are an important way of widening access to wildlife. **Radio Essex** listeners were hooked on our baby barn owls and got involved in naming one of the owlets, 'Barnadette'. On the subject of naming, we also ran a competition to name the **hedgehog mural** in Chelmsford that celebrated the launch of our **Nature Neighbours** campaign. The winner was 'David Hasselhog'. This story alone reached over a million people, with coverage on both ITV and the BBC.

Our aims for 2023

There is a comprehensive plan in place to **grow the revenue and profitability** of the Nature Discovery Centres which looks at all aspects of operations. A comprehensive **marketing plan** has also been developed and is already being rolled out to **increase footfall by 20%** by the end of 2023. This is essential to negate the impact of a worsening economy. This will be supported by additional marketing staff resource profiled in the 2023 budget.

Plans to **enhance the look and feel of the NDCS** and to also improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their operations continue to be implemented throughout 2023 and beyond.

We envisage a **tough year ahead for fundraising** as the economy shrinks and the cost-of-living crisis impacts our supporters. However, we have a **Development Plan** for our Fundraising Team that will improve the performance of all aspects of our membership and fundraising activities, changing the focus in some areas, and recruiting new staff into the team.

There is an ambitious plan for **Essex Ecology Services**, with a new brand to be launched in 2023. We are also accelerating our efforts to derive significant income from **Biodiversity Net Gain credits** and other **nature-based solutions**.

Meanwhile, the **Engagement Strategy** will continue to be embedded in our work, widening access to nature and inspiring people to take action for wildlife. Our emerging 'community organising' ethos will also continue to evolve, with additions to the **Team Wilder portfolio of projects** planned.

We will be **increasing our capacity in Nature Nursery** our 2023 "Outstanding" rating will be used to promoting the amazing work of the Team. More broadly, More broadly, we will be **working more closely with RSWT in education**, specifically through the Education and Learning Network, establishing ourselves as leaders in many areas but also taking the opportunity to learn from others. The development of a **Wilder Learning Strategy** is nearing completion in 2023.

Similarly, we will be developing a new Communications Strategy based on the 5 Rs that have proved to be an effective framework for the past couple of years: **reach, recruitment, retention, reputation, and reaction**. We aim to secure more national features, more social engagement (following a full platform review), improved automation and email marketing, an expanded Ambassador Scheme, the introduction of an Advocacy Working Group, and Marketing Plans for all key areas of business.

We also have ambition plans for **Signage and Interpretation**, research papers planned in partnership with the University of Essex, and we will continue to **Chair the Local Nature Partnership's Community Engagement Executive Group**.

Having trained every member of staff on brand this year, we will also be expanding our internal training to include **Tone of Voice**.

Enable

Our achievements in 2022

The success of our Goals in the 'Protect' and 'Inspire' areas of our Strategic Plan depend on our Enable objective: our ability to work as a team, be efficient, be cost-effective, and deliver high-impact conservation and engagement work. Building on our work in 2021, we made significant headway towards Goal 7 (Evidencing impact), Goal 8 (Embedding innovation and sustainability), Goal 9 (Making our money work harder for nature) and Goal 10 (Working together for wildlife).





Goal 7

Evidencing impact



Jon Hawkins - Surrey Hills Photography

We have taken positive steps towards becoming a more impact-focused organisation in 2022, not least through finalising the **Leadership Review Phase 1** (the establishment of a new SLT) and delivering **Phase 2** (the creation of a new OLT).

We now have an **Impact Repository** on Teams, which makes key data more easily available to SLT and OLT, and supports our **annual upward reporting to RSWT**.

Our annual **Impact Report** has also continued to evolve. However, there still much to do. Early 2023, has seen a huge amount of work towards finalising the revised version of the **Strategic Plan** and developing an accompanying **Impact and Reporting Framework** that ensures that we are measuring and maximising our impact.

Goal 8

Embedding innovation and sustainability



Cardboard tree guards

We successfully achieved re-audit for **Green Dragon Level 1** (Environmental Management System). Each Green Dragon level achievement requires re-auditing annually, a comprehensive approach requiring significant input. The **Carbon Calculator**, was submitted at the end December 2022; this is another technical specialist area as part of the Environmental Management System and involves close working with RSWT and other Trusts across the Network.

An outcome of the Leadership Review – recognising the dispersion of some sustainability tasks to more than one function/directorate – saw SLT engage with a **targeted strategy session on sustainability**. This enabled us to clarify both our understanding of ‘sustainability’ and our aspirations for the Trust regarding this important strategic area. The outcome is a more collaborative approach to sustainability across all Trust activities with workstreams focussed on embedding sustainability from a cultural perspective (‘People’), with financial sustainability (‘Profit’) sitting in the Finance Directorate, and wider sustainability/ climate concerns (‘Planet’) most naturally sitting within Conservation. **Planet, People and Profit** (3 Ps) is the framework we will utilise to drive performance and

achieve impact in areas of sustainability.

A **Sustainability Forum** will be established in 2023, with wide representation from across the Trust to ensure a cohesive and collaborative approach and ensuring each of the ‘three Ps’ are represented to avoid duplication of tasks, enhance communications, ensure greatest impact for the Trust, and further embed sustainability in the cultural narrative of the Trust.

The **Digital Transformation Project**, led by the Director of Finance & Systems, has overseen the introduction of a new **SmartLog system** to support mandatory training and areas of H&S compliance, as well as the commissioning of a new Finance system for the start of the new financial year in January 2023. The tender process was completed for the introduction of a new **HR Information System (HRIS)** in 2022, which will enhance production of management information, provide a fully integrated recruitment system, and integrate our payroll service. These innovations will drive the transformation of transactional outputs to provide greater evidence of impact and high performance at the Trust, as well as enable efficiencies for all Trust staff.

Goal 9

Making our money work harder for nature



Tom and Evie Photography

As discussed in Goals 4 and 6, the focus for the NDCs this year was stability and a return to normal trading. Similarly, the Fundraising Team (including Membership) performed well and **ahead of their budgeted income**. However, there is a recognition that there is greater potential in this area and plans are in place to drive growth in income. **Biodiversity Net Gain** and other **Nature Based Solutions** will become significant income streams for the Trust as we move through 2023 and beyond.

The **Digital Transformation Project**, mentioned in Goal 8, addresses IT infrastructure, hardware, and organisation systems. As a project that will span several years, 2022 has focused on developing a plan for the infrastructure and **establishing the priority order in which to review systems**. Significant progress has been made in developing data storage at our Nature Discovery centres to a **cloud-based system** that will increase our ability to work in a more agile manner and will also bring financial savings.

Our systems development has seen the implementation of **SmartLog** as our compliance system that will host our core mandatory training, create online checks and tests, and give us a platform to develop dynamic risk assessments. This introduces a more efficient and transparent way of working and will create timely reporting processes away from paper-based systems. SmartLog also provides an **asset management function** that will enable monitoring and servicing of key items of equipment, which will again create greater visibility across the organisation.

The implementation work to introduce a **new finance system** has been completed and went live on 1 January 2023. This will see **XLedger** is now being used across the organisation. This will replace many manual processes that have been used in the past, creating streamlined working not only within the Finance Team, but for all users, from staff submitting expense claims to managers authorising invoices.

XLedger will enable budget holders to view their actual spend and budgets in real time, increasing the level of accountability across the organisation and **embedding a finance partnering approach to financial management**.

The initial processes of identifying a new HR system was completed in 2022 and implementation took place mid Q2 of 2023. The requirements for a **CRM system** to support membership and fundraising operations has been started in early 2023, with implementation expected towards the end of the year.

The **new Head of Finance** joined in May 2022 and takes responsibility for the reporting, transactional and statutory requirements of the organisation. With a strong background in charity finance, bringing a wealth of experience and has taken the lead on XLedger implementation.

2022 has been **Year 1 of a 5-year planned budget deficit** that is supported by the Board of Trustees, through a planned investment of Free Reserves through deficit budgets, to reduce identified “excesses” of Free Reserves in relation to the Trust’s Reserve Policy and to give SLT the financial resources to create significant structural changes in the Trust. This will be achieved through **investment in key leadership posts**, by addressing weaknesses in our systems and digital infrastructure and to **develop the commercial operations** of the organisation. This will result in an organisation that is increasingly robust in delivering the Trust’s Strategic Plans and creating efficiencies, to ensure we make the best use of our resources in creating maximum impact.

Goal 10

Working together for wildlife



Bird surveying

Recognising that organisations are only as good as their leadership, 2022 saw the completion of **Phase 1** of the **Leadership Review** with all Directors in post from **February 2022**. Progress on Phase 2 – the appointment of Heads of Department – commenced early in 2022 and by the end of Q3 we had successfully **appointed 9 Heads of Department** from both internal and external recruitment drives. This cohort has now formed the new **Operational Leadership Team**.

The **Leadership Competency Framework** developed in Phase 1 and applicable to SLT and OLT is now undergoing a further iteration to produce an **Organisational Competency Framework**, to be applicable to all roles at the Trust. This will enhance people management at the Trust, using the framework to embed culture, celebrate successes, and develop learning and development actions required to support people in achieving their full potential at work.

An outcome of the Leadership Review has been the necessity to **restructure** within Directorates, to build our capability to be **fit for the future** and meet our aspiration to be an **employer of choice** in Essex. The purpose has been to ensure we have the right people, with the right skillset, in the right place, and at the right time. It has enabled us to **identify skills gaps** and **training requirements**, as well as to build **career pathways** with associated **learning and development** requirements, and to work together to address the significant challenges presented by the external labour market through **addressing turnover** at the Trust and **targeting retention**.

This has meant a challenging year for recruitment – the HR team has placed **107 job adverts** and recruitment drives, welcomed **61 new starters**, and supported **55 leavers** – resulting in significant developments in our recruitment practices, including refreshing **adverts to be more inclusive**, using software to **challenge language for bias**, refreshing our **jobs platform on our website**, and **streamlining our application process**.

Positive onboarding to establish a strong psychological contract is recognised as a significant contributor to staff retention, and we have responded accordingly by introducing a **targeted HR induction** (along with team inductions) to better embed the people management requirements at the Trust. We have also reinstated 'in person' **Corporate Inductions**, all contributing to employee engagement and an EWT welcome that we fully endorse.

The **People & Culture team** itself has been impacted by recruitment challenges; we failed to recruit two out of three Heads of Department (Head of People and Head of Learning & Development). We did, however, successfully recruit our **Head of Culture** internally, appointing to this role our HR Lead, having worked with us for two years, and being instrumental in supporting our CEO in Phase 1 of the Leadership Review. As a qualified and very experienced HR practitioner, this brings over 20 years of knowledge, spanning all sectors.



River surveying

The Trust has demonstrated considerable **agility and resilience** over the past couple of years, and this year has been no exception, given the labour market stressors, rising inflation and cost of living, and ever-increasing energy costs. Once again, we **responded positively**. The People & Culture directorate **amended the team structure** and moved to a Business Partner model. We appointed a **Senior Business Partner – People**, leading on People-related workstreams (HR and Volunteering), and **redesigned our transactional and operational roles** to Officer level, with a **hybrid approach** of sharing some responsibilities and developing important specialisms. This enables us to be more responsive (to absences, annual leave etc), as well as developing **career pathways and succession planning**, as well as being more **impactful**.



Volunteering has had targeted **engagement** this year also; there has been a strong focus on recruitment, on developing **new and innovative volunteering opportunities**, and developing a clearer **framework around volunteer management** at the Trust to embed a 'whole workforce' approach to achieving our strategic objectives.

We believe that **equality, diversity, and inclusion** (EDI) are **fundamental to our success** at the Trust. We know that equitable employers outpace competitors by respecting the unique needs, perspectives, and potential of all team members. We harness this knowledge as part of **strengthening our culture** to build a workplace that is **diverse and inclusive**, which continues to earn deep trust and commitment from our people – and makes us an **attractive proposition** to job seekers. We have established strong links with Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts to continue improvement in our EDI work and are broadening our existing inclusion agenda to incorporate all aspects of EDI, with an **EDI Champions Network** in place ensuring the voice of our people is

heard throughout our work. This work has commenced with our existing HRIS being reconfigured to collect more **data** on staff EDI, allowing us to establish a **clearer benchmark** against which we can monitor our successes.



Our **safeguarding framework** has been further **enhanced** – including **revised policies and procedures** – incorporating key **Ofsted** requirements for our Early Years provision. Our first **Safeguarding Action Team** meeting was held, and the first **Safeguarding Forum**. **Safeguarding Officers and Champions** are being nominated across organisation and policy updates are being shared, **embedding the culture of safety and accountability** across all services.

Level 1 safeguarding training is now a **mandatory** requirement for all staff (unless a role requires Level 2 or 3 safeguarding training) and a new draft **Safer Recruitment policy** has been developed. Recruiting managers will be **trained in safer recruitment practices**. A **revised DBS** (Disclosure and Barring Service) policy has also been completed, which both **supports safeguarding** at the Trust, and provides **assurance** to our parents engaging with Nature Nursery and achieves **compliance** for Ofsted.

Wellbeing has had continued high profile at the Trust, in a year where we have experienced **bereavement** with the tragic loss of two colleagues, a significant **transformation programme** internally, and a **challenging external environment** with rising inflation and cost-of living. Our Wellbeing Wednesday communications continue, written to be both informative and supportive as well as empowering and enabling. We enabled **external bereavement support to staff**. A Menopause Café was held for the first time, with plans for more and keen interest expressed in ongoing participation. We are about to formally launch our **Mental Health First Aider network** and have achieved both **Working Well Level 2** and **Mindful Employer accreditation** this year.

Our aims for 2023

The formation of the OLT enables **SLT** to have a **more strategic focus**, and for our people this enables the Trust to **progress initiatives** which we believe will further **strengthen our culture** and consolidate our position as an **employer of choice**. We will continue to support Directorate restructures, to return staff to a position of stability at the earliest opportunity without elevating risk to the Trust through poor practice and process in transformation/change management.

We will explore **Reward** at the Trust, working innovatively and creatively to address the **serious worries experienced by our people** relating to pay and cost-of-living concerns. We will explore the introduction of a **banded salary structure**, introduce key **learning and development initiatives** to identify and build on **career pathways** with the Trust, and provide greater promotion for our **Employee Assistance Programme**, and our myriad training opportunities with particular focus on **personal development**, including areas such as **financial wellbeing, resilience, emotional intelligence** and **empowerment** to present a fairer and **more transparent view of Total Reward**, and reflect the **value the Trust has in its people**.

We will review our performance management processes, including appraisal, and embed the **Organisational Competency Framework** (including technical skills frameworks) to provide greater clarity and understanding regarding expectations relating to performance and behaviours at the Trust.

Wellbeing will be further enhanced with the launch of our **Wellbeing Strategy**, supported by a calendar of events marking **key EDI dates/events**, and notable **wellbeing/health initiatives**. Work on wellbeing will continue to achieve the next level accreditation in the Working Well framework.

We have developed an **Internal Communications Framework**, which was launched early in 2023 and will significantly improve and develop the way we communicate with our people utilising more and diverse communication channels, enhancing engagement, reflecting accessibility for our diverse workforce, and demonstrating a **listening and learning** organisation. We will work to establish new ways to capture **Employee Voice**, to better understand the needs and lived experiences of our people, which will enable us to respond collaboratively and more effectively to any concerns, to celebrate our many successes, and to enhance trust, engagement, and commitment.

Learning and development will gain greater traction with increased budget in 2023 and directorate restructures are complete. The focus will be on the development of **Personal Development Plans**, a **Management Development Programme** (for OLT initially), **Coaching**, and **professional development** for individuals which will be informed (and phased) by workforce planning, succession planning and developing career pathways. 2023 will also see the introduction of an **apprenticeship programme**, which will be developed as part of workforce planning at the Trust.

The Digital Transformation programme at the Trust has seen the introduction of a new **Human Resources Information System (HRIS)** in early 2023, with enhanced capabilities, including a more comprehensive 'self-serve' function, integrated payroll, and a built-in recruitment platform. This new system will radically transform transactional HR processes for all staff at the Trust, as well as positively impacting efficiencies and productivity within the People directorate. It will also positively impact external applicants, through streamlined recruitment processes and more targeted onboarding for new starters, as well as being more sustainable through the application of more efficient technologies.

In terms of our finances, our focus next year is to **improve the performance of all our income generating activities**, supported by effective development plans and high-quality marketing. This will include shifting the focus of some of our fundraising activities and reviewing the skills and resources available within the team, making **better use of data analytics** to help understand more about our members and to maximise their value to us and our offer to them, launching the **new Essex Ecology Services brand** with an expanded team and ambitious growth plans, an increasing focus on the commercial income from **Biodiversity Net Gain**, and improvements to all aspects of our NDCs with the goal of **increasing footfall by 20%**.

Strategic Achievements, Performance and Future Plans

2022 has been another year of delivering big projects, the Trust has been successful in obtaining funding to complete some large scale projects that have been delivered alongside our ambitious "business as usual" work.

The leadership review has touched virtually every part of the organisation and the embedding of the Senior Leadership Team and Operational Leadership Team has already produced a strong and dynamic basis to deliver throughout 2022 and into the start of 2023.

The Trust strategy has been refreshed in early 2023 and aligns with the RSWT strategy to 2030. It reaffirms the commitment of the Trust to its two key strategic objectives of

- '30 by 30' (which is '30% of land and sea in Essex connected and protected for wildlife by 2030') and
- '1 in 4' ('1 in 4 people taking action for wildlife in Essex by 2030').



Key ■ 2021 ■ 2022

Financial review

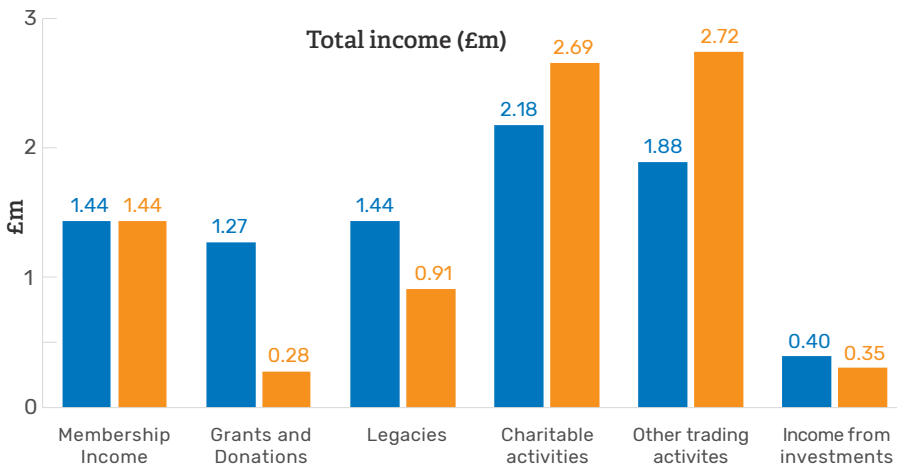


Membership Income has remained steady compared to 2021 at £1.44M, reflecting the underlying membership levels. **Grants and Donations** are at a lower level compared to last year due to large Grants received in 2021, including the final £350K towards the Langdon build and £183K from 5 further projects. **Legacy Income** follows an unpredictable pattern, and the Trust is reporting a lower level than the 2021 amount which has had a significant effect on the overall total income level for the year.

Income from **Charitable Activities** has increased, partly as a result of educational activities being resumed after COVID restriction have eased during 2022. Schools visits have not returned to previous levels, but there was a steady improvement during the year.

Other trading activities from our Nature Discovery Centres was slow to pick up during the year, with the first quarter still operating under COVID restrictions. Income levels have continued to increase during the year, and are at near pre-COVID levels by the end of 2022.

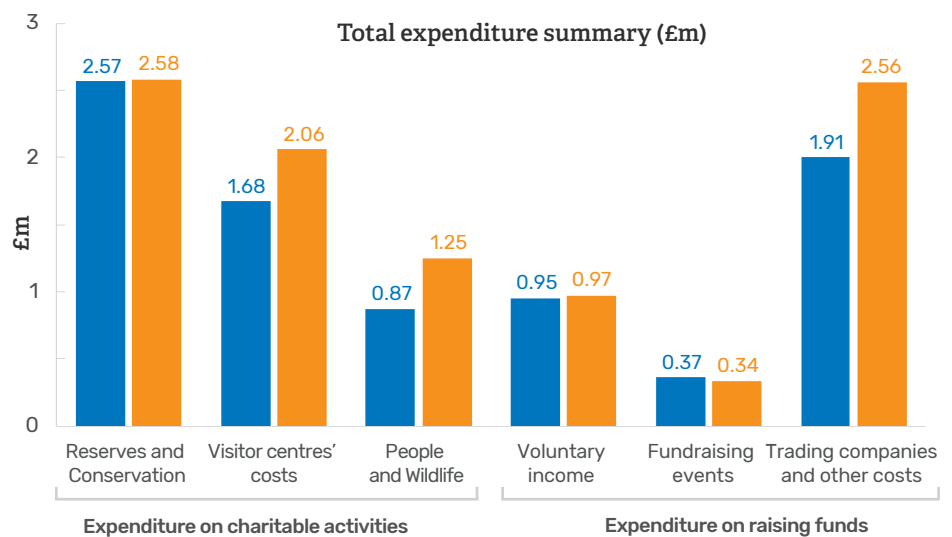
We are immensely grateful to our members and donors for their generous support shown for appeals, memberships and donations.



Expenditure

Expenditure on charitable activities is spent directly on our reserves and conservation work as described in the Achievements and Performance section above. There has been an increase in spending on our charitable activities, representing a recommencement of work on our reserves returning to preCOVID levels.

Expenditure on raising funds has increased in 2022 mainly through the Nature Discovery centres run by Essex Wildlife Sales (EWS). As Income levels have increased in the NDCs, so have the associated costs.



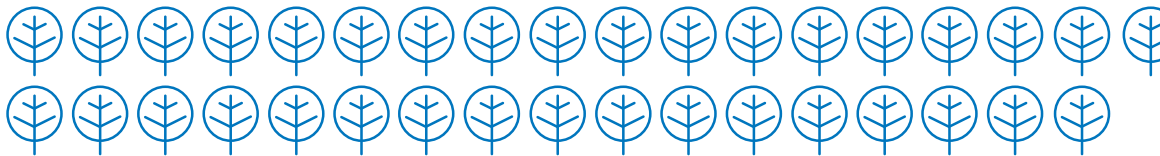
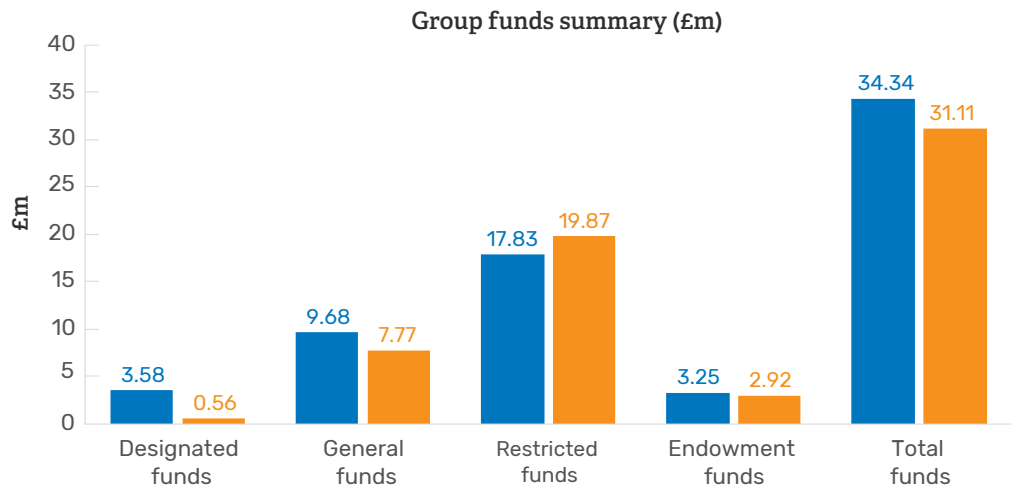
2021 total expenditure
£8.35m



2022 total expenditure
£9.77m

Total funds

Total funds have reduced during the year, as a result of a planned operating deficit of £1.4M, additionally these were impacted by an unrealised loss of £1.8m on the market valuation of our investments. Investment valuations in the previous 2 years have reported a total of £1.7m gains, the relative size of our investment portfolio creates a significant impact to the funds values when valuations fluctuate over time.



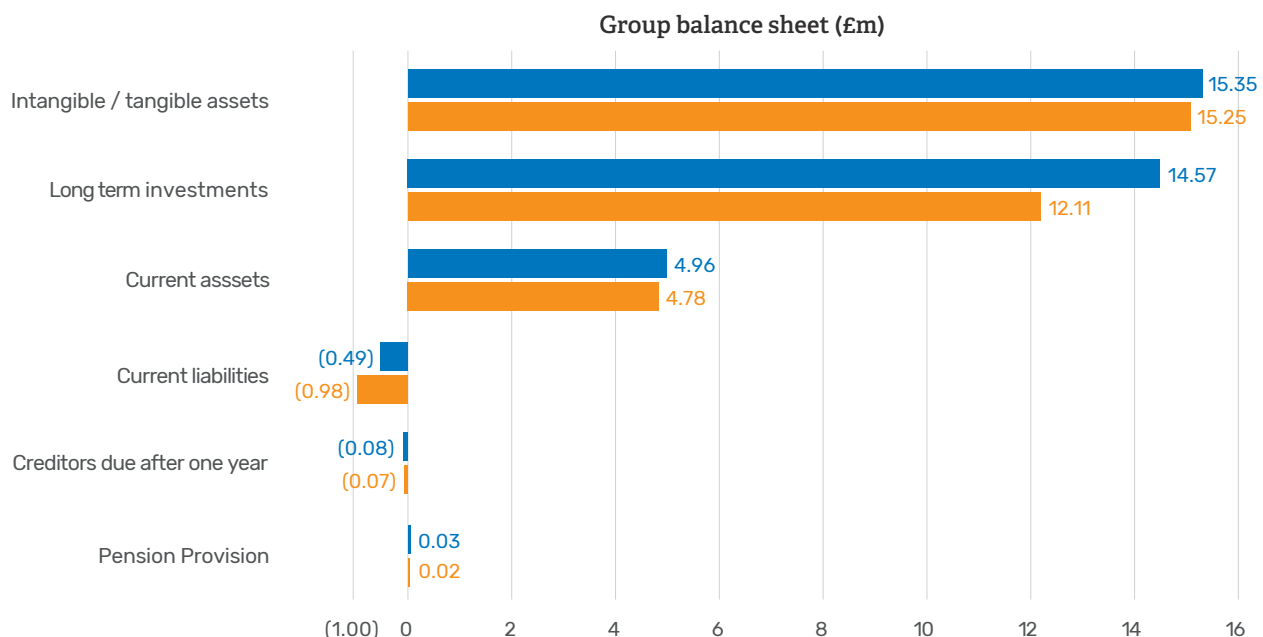
2021 total funds
£34.34m



2022 total funds
£31.11m

Balance Sheet

The Balance Sheet remains largely unchanged at the end of 2022 compared to 2021, with the exception of the previously mentioned change in long term investment valuations.



Financial review (continued)

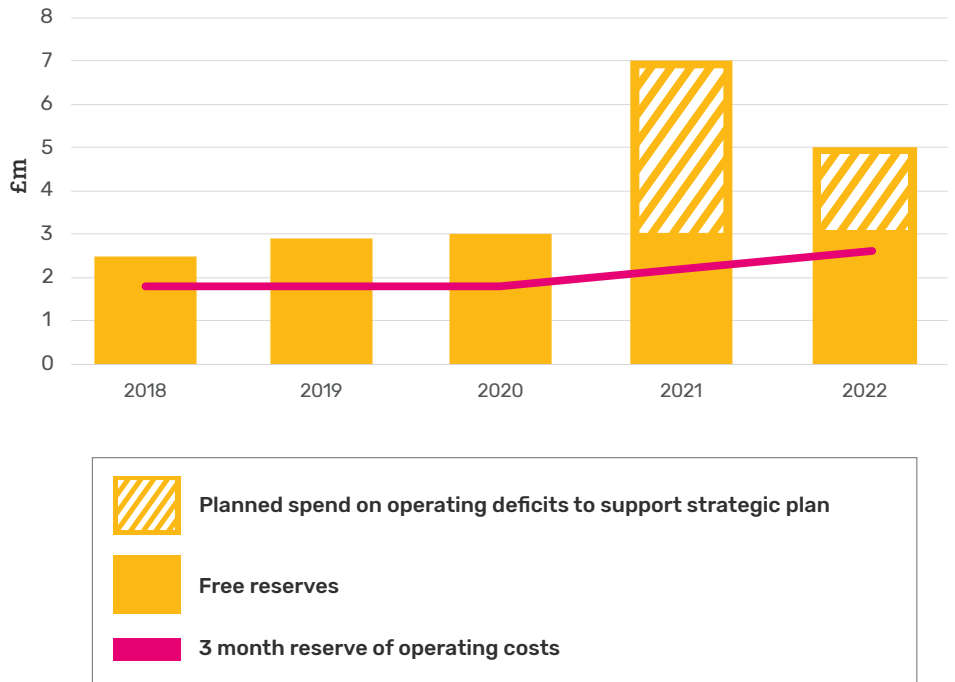
Reserves policy

Free reserves provide the working capital requirements of the charity, whilst providing a buffer of liquid funds in case of any short-term and substantial decline in income, unexpected increase in costs, or unexpected exposure to risk with financial consequences. The free reserves are especially intended to ensure that the Trust's considerable contractual obligations to staff, freehold and leasehold premises and funding partners can be met. Essex Wildlife Trust calculates its free reserves by deducting the unrestricted fixed asset balance from the general fund balance shown on the balance sheet.

The Trustees have adopted a risk based approach to calculating the free reserves level within the Reserves Policy and have set a minimum level of no less than £3m.

The Trust has a financial plan to support the activities outlined in our Strategic report that will require deficit budgets in the next few years with a planned reduction in free reserves of a further £2m.

Free Reserves Summary (£m)



Investment powers and policy

Under the terms of the Trust's Articles of Association, the charity has the power to invest in any way the Trustees deem to be appropriate and to the overall benefit of the Trust.

Following the adoption of new Articles of Association by the Membership at the AGM in 2013 & 2016, and changes to the methods used to manage the charity's investment portfolio, including the appointment of professional investment advisers, the Trustees agreed a new investment policy, which was reviewed and updated in July 2022.

The investment portfolio is reviewed on an annual basis with our advisors to ensure the chosen investment route continues to reflect the Trust's policy. The levels of investments are maintained with reference to the financial planning that forms part of the budgeting process and to support any strategic long-term plans for the Trust.

In considering the investment policy, the Trustees place much emphasis on the need to invest in financial products that are considered to be ethical in nature having regard to the objects of the charity as well as investments that have strong environmental, social and governance credentials. In furtherance of this approach, all of the long-term investment portfolios managed for the Trust and its subsidiary, Chafford Gorges Limited by Sarasin were switched into Sarasin's Climate Active Fund during 2020.

To demonstrate the ethical requirements of the charity, as balanced against the need to ensure that the charity's investments generate income to contribute to the running costs of the charity, the salient parts of the investment policy are as follows: -

The charity will:

- Use the income and capital generated through investment of its financial reserves to further the objectives of the charity;
- Seek social, environmental and ethical investments with an emphasis on investing in companies that have a positive impact on the environment;
- Avoid investing directly in companies that attribute over 10% of their turnover to fossil fuels, tobacco products, alcohol products, gambling, pornography or the production of armaments.

The investment objective:

- For long-term investments of the charity, to achieve capital growth in excess of inflation over the long-term, whilst generating an income to support the on-going activities of the charity;
- For the short-term investments of the charity, to preserve their capital value with a minimum level of risk. Assets should be realisable without undue financial or performance penalty to meet cash flow requirements.

Performance of the long-term investments will be measured primarily against three benchmarks:

- An appropriate composite benchmark based on the long-term strategic asset allocation of the portfolio;
- An absolute return benchmark of CPI + 4.00% pa net of fees;
- The Arc Steady Growth Charity Index

Internal Financial Controls

The Trustees have overall responsibility for ensuring that the Trust has in place an appropriate system of controls, financial and otherwise, to provide reasonable assurance that:

- it is operating efficiently and effectively;
- its assets are safeguarded against unauthorised use or disposal;
- proper records are maintained, and financial information used within the Trust or for publication is reliable;
- it complies with relevant laws and regulation.

The Trustees are aware of the guidance CC8 called "Internal Financial Controls for Charities" published by the Charity Commission for England and Wales and are satisfied that the system of financial controls operated by the Trust during the year to which this report refers complied in all material aspects with the Commission's guidance.

Investment powers and policy (continued)

Internal Financial Controls (continued)

These systems provide reasonable assurance against material misstatement or loss and include a strategic plan, a risk register, monthly management accounts and an annual budget. The documents, which are approved by the Trustees, enable the Trust to monitor the actual quarterly results against the appropriate budgets to ensure that the delegated authority to the Executive defined by the Trustees is adhered to throughout the year.

The Trust needs to be sure that all of its dealings are conducted in a fair and open manner. Therefore, in line with the provisions of the Bribery Act 2010, the Trust

has adopted a formal policy and has implemented systems for controlling and recording any gifts or benefits offered to our staff by companies or others.

Training for all existing staff took place when the Act was first introduced and the Trust's policy and procedures regarding bribery are incorporated in the induction of new staff. The contents of the policy are reviewed periodically and a copy of the latest edition is readily available from the Trust's intranet system.



Risk management

Principal Risks & Uncertainties

We have provisionally reviewed the risk approach, which consists of Strategic Risks which are the responsibility of the Board and an operational risk register which is overseen by the management team and the leadership group.

Generally, whilst the risks faced by the Trust remain similar over the years, the Trustees and staff remain vigilant because external, as well as internal, circumstances change. With this in mind and in view of the fact that the full extent of the Covid pandemic was not predicted by our risk register (nor indeed many others), we have changed the approach such that the Strategic Risk Register addresses the 'things that need to go right' to protect the charity, since predicting all 'the things that could go wrong' is not only a potentially infinite task, but experience shows that it rarely predicts that which does emerge to pose a significant risk to the charity and achieving its strategic aim.

Thus the current strategic risk priorities we are addressing are:

Strategic Risk	Description
1 Impact	Are we making the desired impact in support of our charitable objectives and delivery of strategy?
2 Financial sustainability	Are we managing the finances to ensure we continue to make an impact in the medium to long term?
3 Governance and Compliance	Are we meeting our governance, regulatory, legal and donor compliance requirements and expectations?
4 Reputation	Are we able to prevent, manage and respond effectively to any incident that could result in damage to our reputation?
5 Operational	Are we tracking the operational performance and identifying areas which could cause strategic concerns?
6 People	Are we effectively managing our people?
7 External	Are we aware of external events (policy, stakeholder, economic, etc) which will impact the delivery of our strategy?

Subject to review by the Task and Finish Group, we have identified a Strategic Leadership Team lead for each of the above risks and are working through the delivery of actions to address areas where we believe improvement is necessary.



Fundraising at Essex Wildlife Trust

Photo: Monkey Business - stock.adobe.com

Essex Wildlife Trust is committed to fundraising and communicating in an honest and transparent way. We rely on the generosity and enthusiasm of members and supporters to fund the majority of our work to protect wildlife and inspire the next generation to care for wildlife too.

Essex Wildlife Trust is registered with the Fundraising Regulator (FR), contributing the appropriate voluntary fee and adhering to its rules and guidance. The FR is responsible for investigating any complaints regarding charity fundraising. We continue to keep abreast of changes and recommendations and are committed to complying with all of these regulations. We also follow the Institute of Fundraising's Code of Practice and comply with the key principles embodied in this code.

Our approach to fundraising is that we are honest and transparent with our donors and supporters about where their money goes and why we ask for donations. We publish information widely about our work and communicate why we need donations and what they will be spent on.

Together with five other Wildlife Trusts, we are a stakeholder in a wholly-owned Wildlife Trust membership recruitment company, Wildlife Fundraising Central Limited. The company is managed by a Board of Trustees drawn from the relevant Wildlife Trusts and other experts. This company is transparent in its fundraising techniques, regulated by the Institute of Fundraising (IOF) and meets with its member Trusts every three months. There is a written agreement

between all parties agreeing fundraising standards, monitoring of fundraisers and compliance. Other fundraisers are employed directly by Essex Wildlife Trust and managed as members of staff.

Essex Wildlife Trust is accountable regarding its fundraising. Essex Wildlife Trust monitors fundraising activity through regular reports to the Board of Trustees, based on our budgetary and management accounts process and policy.

All projects are approved and managed through the Strategic Leadership Team, with Board approval where appropriate. All of our projects and core fundraising contribute to Essex Wildlife Trust's strategy and overall vision – to have a county rich in wildlife with people connected to nature – with communities that value the countryside and that are inspired to help protect it.

Essex Wildlife Trust has a complaints policy and the procedure for making complaints regarding our fundraising can be found on our website, as a link under Essex Wildlife Trust's Fundraising Promise. Essex Wildlife Trust's policy regarding Vulnerable Adults and Treating Donors Fairly sets out how we expect our fundraisers to behave. Essex Wildlife Trust is respectful – we respect decisions not to make donations and to withdraw membership, we will contact our supporters and donors in the way that they request, we will respond to queries in an open, honest, courteous and professional way. We will acknowledge any complaint within five working days to let complainants know when they can expect a response.

Structure, governance and management

The Trust is governed by a Memorandum and Articles of Association and is a company limited by guarantee with the number 00638666.

The Governing document

Essex Wildlife Trust Ltd is a company limited by guarantee, incorporated on 2 October 1959, and governed by its Memorandum and Articles of Association the latest versions of which were approved by Members at the Annual General Meeting held on 22 June 2013 and amended on September 10 2016. The company has no issued or unissued share capital and the liability of each Member of the Trust in the event of winding up is limited to £1.

Essex Wildlife Trust was entered on the Register of Charities for England and Wales on 22nd September 1962.

Organisation

The Board of Trustees is responsible for determining the strategic direction of the Trust and for monitoring performance towards those set objectives. The Board meets formally at least 5 times per year, there are Committees which also meet 5 times a year, (for example, a Finance and Audit Committee exists to advise the Board on financial matters) and other informal meetings take place throughout the year.

A Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is appointed by the Trustees to manage the day to day operations of the charity. To facilitate effective operation, the CEO has delegated authority for operational matters, within the terms of delegation approved by the Trustees.

Attendance at meetings

The following table shows the attendance at meeting for the Board of Trustees and Finance and Audit Committees, each having a total of five meetings during the year.

Trustee	Board of Trustee meetings	Finance and Audit Committee
Keeley Hazelhurst	4	4
Geoff Duffield	2	-
Charles Joynson	4	4
Malcolm Hardy	3	-
Robert Holmes	5	5
Michelle Wall	3	4
Catherine Hawkins	3	-
Elin Simonsson	3	-
James Wren	4	-
Naomi Kingston	3	-
Thoko Kaime	2	-
Sarah Balser	1	-

Appointment of Trustees

As set out in Clause 11.2 of the Articles of Association, the Chair of the Trustees is appointed by the Trustees from among their number. There is provision for up to 13 Trustees in total, one third of who are elected annually by the members of the charitable company, either by post or by attending the Annual General Meeting. Trustees serve for a period of three years, with a maximum of nine years.

As set out in Clause 9 of the Articles of Association, one additional Trustee is appointed by resolution of the Trustees for the time being to take the role of the Treasurer for a term of three years.

The Trustees have the power to co-opt to fill a vacancy that occurs between AGMs. The co-opted Trustee must, however, stand down or be nominated for election at the next AGM. Following changes to the Articles approved by Members at the Annual General Meeting held on September 10th 2016, the Board are now able to appoint up to two trustees.

At the Annual General Meeting in each year, one third of the Members of the Board shall retire from office but shall be eligible for re-election. If the number of Members of the Board is not exactly divisible by three, the number of Members to retire shall be determined by rounding to the nearest whole number.

The Members of the Board to retire at an Annual General Meeting shall be those who have served as such for the longest period since last re-election and where there is an equality of service the person to retire shall be determined by lot.

Induction and training of Board members

Trustees' skills are reviewed regularly to ensure that the balance is suitable. New Trustees are inducted into the charity by discussions between themselves and other Trustees, and members of staff, as opportunities arise. They are presented with background information and have access to the Charity Commission's website.

Statement of the Board of Trustee's responsibilities

The Trustees (who are also directors of Essex Wildlife Trust for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company law requires the Trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and the group and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the charitable group for that period.

In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable 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 charity will continue in business.

The Trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable company and the group and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Finance & Audit Committee

The Trustees established the Finance & Audit Committee to take on a number of detailed financial matters in order to advise and make recommendations to the Board. The work of the committee continued during the year under review. A Task and Finish group to assess the risk profile and approach of the charity has been agreed but has yet to meet.

Key management personnel remuneration

The Trustees consider the Chief Executive and the Strategic Leadership Team as comprising the key management personnel of the charity, in charge of running and operating the charity on a day to day basis. All Trustees give of their time freely and no remuneration was received for trustee duties in the year. Details of trustee expenses and related party transactions are disclosed in note 10 to the accounts.

Trustees are required to disclose all relevant interests and register them with the Chief Executive and in accordance with the Trust's policy, withdraw from decisions where a conflict of interest arises. Where the Trust or any of the Trustees have interests with the trading operations of the charity's trading subsidiaries, any such interests are disclosed.

Relationship with the charity and related parties including its subsidiaries

Other Wildlife Trusts

The charity is a member of The Wildlife Trusts that is registered as the Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts (RSWT) charity number 207238. RSWT acts as an umbrella body on behalf of all county Wildlife Trusts. County Wildlife Trusts have the use of The Wildlife Trusts' logo and benefit from their resources, best practice and experience. Membership gives the charity a national voice and profile. However, each member of the RSWT remains entirely independent in terms of governance and financial management. Access to the Charity Commission's website.

Subsidiary companies

The Trust has four subsidiaries, the principal activities of which are as follows: -

- Essex Wildlife Sales Limited (EWS)**
 The retail sale of goods and catering at various Trust Nature Discovery Centres and other venues throughout Essex.
- Essex Ecology Services Limited (EECOS)**
 The provision of advisory services relating to environmental matters.
- Chafford Gorges Limited**
 The conservation and maintenance of the area known as Chafford Gorges Nature Park in Thurrock.
- Thameside Nature Park Limited**
 The conservation and maintenance of the area known as Thurrock Thameside Nature Park adjacent to Mucking in Thurrock



The Trust is also a Corporate Trustee of the Veolia Pitsea Marshes and Veolia Havering Riverside Maintenance Trusts.

Together with five other Wildlife Trusts, we are a stakeholder in a wholly-owned Wildlife Trust membership recruitment company, Wildlife Fundraising Central Limited. The company is managed by a Board of Trustees drawn from the relevant Wildlife Trusts and other experts.

Statement as to disclosure of information to auditors

The members of Board who were in office on the date of approval of these financial statements have confirmed, as far as they are aware, that there is no relevant audit information of which the auditors are unaware. Each of the members of Board have confirmed that they have taken all steps that they ought to have taken as members of Board in order to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that it has been communicated to the auditor.



Keeley Hazelhurst

Chair
Essex Wildlife Trust

The Auditors

Following a review and retendering of audit services in 2023 which has not concluded at the date of this report, the Board will make a recommendation on the appointment of auditors of the charitable company to be put to members at the Annual General meeting in the notice of that meeting.

The Report of the Members of Board, which includes the Strategic Report on pages 4 to 41, were approved by the Board on 10 August 2023 and signed on their behalf:

On behalf of the Board

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Keeley Hazelhurst". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

K Hazelhurst - Chair

Dated: 10 August 2023

Independent Auditors Report

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Essex Wildlife Trust Limited ('the parent charitable company') and its subsidiaries for the year ended 31 December 2022 which comprise the Consolidated Statement of Financial Activities, the Group Balance Sheet, the Charity Balance Sheet, the Consolidated Statement of Cash Flows and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies. 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 Ireland' (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the group's and of the parent charitable company's affairs as at 31 December 2022 and of the group's 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; and
- 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 financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the group in accordance with the 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 charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from 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. 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.

In connection with our audit of the financial statements, 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 audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether there is a material misstatement in the financial statements or a material misstatement of the other information. 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.

Opinions on other matters 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 strategic report and the trustees' report for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements; and
- the strategic report and the trustees' report have 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 group and the parent charitable company and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified material misstatements in the strategic report or the trustees' report.

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

- adequate accounting records have not been kept by the parent charitable company, or returns adequate for our audit have not been received from branches not visited by us; or
- the parent charitable company financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- certain disclosures of trustees' remuneration specified by law are not made; or
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit.

Responsibilities of trustees

As explained more fully in the trustees' responsibilities statement set out on page 40, 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 the trustees 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 group's and the parent charitable company'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 the trustees either intend to liquidate the group or the parent charitable company or to cease operations, or have 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 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.

Explanation as to what extent the audit was considered capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud

The objectives of our audit in respect of fraud, are; to identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements due to fraud; to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence regarding the assessed risks of material misstatement due to fraud, through designing and implementing appropriate responses to those assessed risks; and to respond appropriately to instances of fraud or suspected fraud identified during the audit. However, the primary responsibility for the prevention and detection of fraud rests with both management and those charged with governance of the charitable company.

Our approach was as follows:

- We obtained an understanding of the legal and regulatory requirements applicable to the charitable company and considered that the most significant are the Companies Act 2006, the Charities Act 2011, the Charity SORP, and UK financial reporting standards as issued by the Financial Reporting Council.

- We obtained an understanding of how the charitable company complies with these requirements by discussions with management and those charged with governance.
- We assessed the risk of material misstatement of the financial statements, including the risk of material misstatement due to fraud and how it might occur, by holding discussions with management and those charged with governance.
- We inquired of management and those charged with governance as to any known instances of non-compliance or suspected non-compliance with laws and regulations.
- Based on this understanding, we designed specific appropriate audit procedures to identify instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. This included making enquiries of management and those charged with governance and obtaining additional corroborative evidence as required.

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 purposes of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the group's internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by the 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 group's or the parent charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to

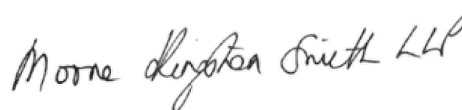
draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the group or the parent charitable company 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.
- Obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence regarding the financial information of the entities or business activities within the group to express an opinion on the consolidated financial statements. We are responsible for the direction, supervision and performance of the group audit. We remain solely responsible for our audit opinion.

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.

Use of our report

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



Karen Wardell

Senior Statutory Auditor
for and on behalf of Moore
Kingston Smith LLP
Chartered Accountants
Statutory Auditor

Orbital House
20 Eastern Road
Romford, Essex
RM1 3PJ

Dated: 23 August 2023

Consolidated Statement of Financial Activities

	Notes	Unrestricted funds (£)	Restricted funds (£)	Endowment funds (£)	Total 2022 (£)	Total 2021 (£) (restated)
Incoming and endowments from						
Donations and legacies	3	2,527,145	104,114	-	2,631,259	4,151,414
Charitable activities	4	1,632,330	1,058,247	-	2,690,577	2,183,469
Other trading activities	5	2,714,636	400	-	2,715,036	1,882,169
Income from investments	6	136,390	129,459	82,952	348,801	398,215
Total		7,010,501	1,292,220	82,952	8,385,673	8,615,267
Expenditure on						
Charitable activities	7	4,402,127	1,423,752	72,092	5,897,971	5,116,512
Raising funds	8	3,856,873	19,272	-	3,876,145	3,234,497
Total	9	8,259,000	1,443,024	72,092	9,774,116	8,351,009
Net (expenditure)/income		(1,248,499)	(150,804)	10,860	(1,388,443)	264,258
Transfer between funds		(2,751,811)	2,751,811	-	-	-
Other gains/(losses)						
Actuarial gains/(losses) on defined benefit pension	11	(32,131)	-	-	(32,131)	138,199
Net (losses)/gains on investments	15	(894,189)	(565,284)	(342,735)	(1,802,208)	975,075
Net movement in funds		(4,926,630)	2,035,723	(331,875)	(3,222,782)	1,377,532
Reconciliation of funds						
Total funds brought forward		13,257,616	17,829,819	3,248,490	34,335,925	32,958,393
Total funds carried forward	25	8,330,986	19,865,542	2,916,615	31,113,143	34,335,925

The statement of financial activities contains all gains and losses for the year and all activities relate to continuing operations. The profit for the purposes of the Companies Act 2006 is the net income before unrealised gains/(losses).

The detailed comparative information for the statement of financial activities is included at note 30.

The notes on pages 49 to 78 form part of these financial statements.

Consolidated and Charity Balance Sheets

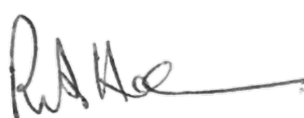
	Notes	Group 2022 (£)	Group 2021 (£) (restated)	Charity 2022 (£)	Charity 2021 (£) (restated)
Fixed Asset					
Intangible assets	13	1,177	3,743	1,177	3,743
Tangible assets	14	15,251,520	15,342,678	15,060,936	15,150,044
Long Term Investments	15	12,110,189	14,571,979	8,405,266	10,269,217
Total fixed assets		27,362,886	29,918,400	23,467,379	25,423,004
Current assets					
Stocks		412,848	262,218	142,395	45,000
Debtors	16	2,002,498	1,844,438	2,708,452	2,439,904
Short Term Investments	17	1,834,530	2,063,165	1,834,530	2,063,165
Cash at bank and in hand		531,933	788,456	315,413	692,483
Total current assets		4,781,809	4,958,277	5,000,790	5,240,552
Liabilities					
Creditors:					
Amounts falling due within one year	18	(977,982)	(488,100)	(1,206,385)	(570,597)
Net current assets		3,803,827	4,470,177	3,794,405	4,669,955
Creditors:					
Amounts falling due within one year	19	(72,337)	(78,330)	(72,337)	(78,330)
Defined benefit pension scheme asset	11	18,767	25,678	18,767	25,678
Total net assets		31,113,143	34,335,925	27,208,214	30,040,307
The funds of the charity					
Unrestricted funds					
Designated funds	20	559,298	3,580,221	559,298	3,580,221
General funds		7,771,688	9,677,395	8,370,706	10,266,372
		8,330,986	13,257,616	8,930,004	13,846,593
Restricted funds	21	19,865,542	17,829,819	15,361,595	12,945,224
Endowment funds	22	2,916,615	3,248,490	2,916,615	3,248,490
Total funds	25	31,113,143	34,335,925	27,208,214	30,040,307

These accounts were approved by the Board and authorised for issue on 10 August 2023.

A separate Statement of Financial Activities (SOFA) is not presented because the charitable company has taken advantage of the exemptions afforded by section 408 of Companies Act 2006. The net movement in funds for the parent charity was a deficit of £2,832,093 (2021: surplus of £1,042,671).



K Hazelhurst – Chair



R Holmes – Treasurer

The notes on pages 49 to 78 form part of these financial statements.
Company number 00638666.

Consolidated Cash flow statement

	2022 (£)	2022 (£)	2021 (£)	2021 (£)
Cash flows from operating activities				
Net cash used by operating activities		(956,908)		(1,885)
Cash flows from investing activities				
Dividends and interest	348,801		398,215	
Proceeds from the sale of fixed assets	-		44,600	
Purchase of fixed assets	(534,947)		(795,008)	
Proceeds from the sale of investments	659,582		120,000	
Purchase of investments	-		(316,253)	
Net cash provided/(used) in investing activities		473,436		(548,446)
Change in cash and cash equivalents in the reporting period		(483,472)		(550,331)
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the reporting period		2,826,554		3,376,885
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the reporting period		2,343,082		2,826,554

Reconciliation of net income to net cash inflow from operating activities

	2022 (£)	2021 (£) (restated)
Net (expenditure)/income for the reporting period (as per the statement of financial activities)	(3,222,782)	1,377,532
Depreciation/amortisation	628,671	475,432
Losses/(gains) on investments	1,802,208	(975,075)
Pension actuarial (gains)/losses	32,131	(138,199)
Dividends, interest and rents from investments	(348,801)	(398,215)
Profit on the sale of fixed assets	-	(44,600)
Increase in stock	(150,630)	(73,600)
Increase in debtors	(158,060)	(260,920)
Increase in creditors	458,669	35,024
Decrease in local trust balances	1,686	736
Net cash (outflow)/inflow from operating activity	(956,908)	(1,885)

Analysis of cash and cash equivalents

	2022 (£)	2021 (£)
Deposits on less than 3 months' notice	1,834,530	2,063,165
Cash at bank and in hand	508,552	763,389
	2,343,082	2,826,554

Notes to the consolidated financial statements

1. Accounting policies

Company information

Essex Wildlife Trust is a limited company domiciled and incorporated in England and Wales. The registered office is Abbots Hall Farm, Great Wigborough, Colchester, Essex, CO5 7RZ.

1.1. Basis of accounting

The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention, with the exception of listed investments which are included at their market value. The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with 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 effective 1 January 2015 (The FRS 102 Charities SORP), the Companies Act 2006 and Charities Act 2011.

The financial statements are prepared in Sterling, which is the functional currency of the charitable company. Monetary amounts in these financial statements are rounded to the nearest pound.

The Trustees confirm that the Charity meets the definition of a public benefit entity under FRS 102.

1.2. Group Accounts

The Statement of Financial Activities (SOFA) and Balance Sheet consolidate the financial statements of the charity and its subsidiary undertakings. The results of the subsidiaries are consolidated on a line by line basis.

No separate SOFA has been presented for the charity as permitted by Section 408 of the Companies Act 2006.

1.3. Fund Accounting:

Unrestricted Funds:

These funds can be used for any of the charity's purposes.

Restricted Income Funds:

These funds have been given to the Trust for a particular purpose to be used in accordance with the wishes of the donor.

Endowment funds:

These funds have been given to the Trust for a particular purpose to be used in accordance with the wishes of the donor. The capital can generally not be realised.

Designated funds:

Projects: These funds were set aside by the Trustees for specific projects. Many of these projects are partly funded from restricted funds with the unfunded element set aside from general funds.

1.4. Incoming resources

Income from investments, Gift Aid and deeds of covenant is included gross, and is accounted for when it is receivable or the charity's right to it becomes legally enforceable. Provision has been made for Income Tax reclaimable at the year-end but not yet received.

Legacy income is included in the accounts when the amount due can be quantified with reasonable probability and it is probable that it will be received. Receipt is normally probable when there has been grant of probate, the estate has sufficient assets to pay the legacy and any conditions attached are either within the control of the charity or have been met.

Grants receivable including government grants are accounted for when there is sufficient information to enable the claim to be made or the claim has been made and there is clear indication to suggest the claim will be met.

Income from Donations is accounted for on a receipts basis.

1.5. Membership Income

Membership income is taken to the Statement of Financial Activities over the life of the subscription, taking into account the type of membership involved.

1.6. Volunteer Help

The Trust receives support from a wide variety of volunteers. It is not practical to place a value on the time volunteered by all these persons, due to the variety of duties performed, the differences in time spent, and the sheer number of volunteers who gave of their time.

1.7. Resources Expended

Indirect costs are allocated to the expenditure headings in the SOFA on the basis of the number of employees in each area of work.

Cost of Raising Funds consists of expenditure relating to appeals, communications requesting funds, applying for grants and other general publicity as part of fundraising together with associated support activities and cost of sales.

Administration and Support of charitable activities consists of those costs incurred in support of expenditure on the objects of the charity. These include the provision of the premises, personnel, information technology and audit fees.

1.8. Finance and operating leases

Rentals payable under operating leases are charged to the SOFA over the period in which the cost is incurred. The Trust has no finance leases.

1.9. Irrecoverable VAT

The charity and its subsidiaries are partially exempt. Irrecoverable VAT is allocated to the appropriate cost categories.

1.10. Land

Interest in land purchased by the Trust including expenditure on capital projects is stated at cost. Land in joint ownership is also stated at cost. Land gifted to the Trust since 1 January 1993 is accounted for at valuation at the date the gift was made.

The charity has been unable to allocate historic costs for freehold land and long leasehold land to specific properties and accordingly the total cost cannot be analysed between the two different types of interest.

No value is attributable to land given to the Trust before 1 January 1993 nor are changes in the value of land after its acquisition recognised.

1.11. Heritage assets

The Charity's objects include the conservation of nature for the purpose of study and research and to educate the public in understanding and appreciation of nature, the awareness of its value and the need for its conservation. As such the Charity owns and maintains a number of nature reserves that fall into the definition of heritage assets in accordance with FRS 102. These assets, when purchased other than gifted, have been capitalised at cost at the date of acquisition, and being land in nature have not been depreciated.

These assets have been included within tangible fixed assets and not separately disclosed as the information on their cost or valuation is not available and such information cannot be obtained at a cost commensurate with the benefit to the users of the financial statements and to the Charity.

The costs of maintaining the heritage assets are expensed through the Statement of Financial Activities as incurred, as part of the Trust's charitable activities.

1.12. Amortisation

Amortisation is provided at the following rates in order to write off the cost of each asset over its estimated useful life.

Computer software	33⅓% on cost p.a.
-------------------	-------------------

1.13. Depreciation

Depreciation is not provided on freehold land which is considered to have a useful life of more than fifty years. Assets in the course of construction are not depreciated.

Moveable assets over £1,000 are capitalised. Tangible fixed assets other than freehold land are stated at cost less depreciation.

Depreciation is provided at the following rates in order to write off the cost of each asset over its estimated useful life.

Buildings	2% on cost per annum, or if lower, the remaining lease term.
External works	10% on cost p.a.
Vehicles & attachments	20% on cost p.a.
Fixtures & fittings	20% on cost p.a.
Plant & equipment	20% on cost p.a.
Computer equipment	33.33% on cost p.a.
Office equipment	33.33% on cost p.a.

1.14. Investments

Investments are stated at market value. It is the Trust's policy to keep valuations up to date such that when investments are sold, there is no gain or loss arising relating to the previous year. As a result, the SOFA includes those unrealised gains and losses arising from the revaluation of the investment portfolio at the year end. Disclosure is made in the notes to the accounts of the difference between historic cost and sale proceeds of investments sold during the year. Livestock is valued at the prevailing market value.

1.15. Stocks

Stocks are stated at the lower of cost and net realisable value.

1.16. Pension costs

The Trust operates a defined contribution scheme for the benefit of all of its employees. The costs of the defined contributions are written off against incoming resources in the year they are payable. The assets of the scheme are held separately from the Trust in independently administered funds. The majority of the employees are members of a money purchase policy, which was set up to meet the government's requirements regarding pension provisions for all staff. Contributions to the policy made on behalf of employees are also charged against incoming resources in the year they are paid.

The Trust is also a member of the Wildlife Trust Pension Scheme (WTPS) which is a hybrid scheme whose defined benefits section is in deficit. The scheme was closed to new members and future accrual on 30 September 2005.

Under defined benefit accounting the Scheme assets are measured at fair value. Scheme liabilities are measured on an actuarial basis using the projected unit credit method and are discounted at

appropriate high quality corporate bond rates. The net surplus or deficit is presented separately from other net assets on the Statement of Financial Position. The current service cost and costs from settlements and curtailments are charged to operating surplus. Past service costs are recognised in the current reporting period. Interest is calculated on the net defined benefit liability. Re-measurements are reported in other comprehensive income.

1.17. Going concern

The previous 2 years of accounts for 2020 and 2021 were heavily influenced by the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. 2022 results for our Sales through Essex Wildlife Sales, although affected to a lesser effect than previous years, were still impacted with the easing of restrictions in the first quarter of 2022. This recovery continued to gain momentum during the year and the final position at the end of 2022 is a sound basis for 2023, with early results in the new year supporting this. The balance sheet for Essex Wildlife Sales is still in a deficit position as a result of Covid related losses and the directors are working on a long term plan to address this.

Economic uncertainty during 2022, notably extraordinary political events, both in the UK and further afield in Ukraine have led to inflation fears, affecting the valuations and returns on investments.

1.18. Financial assets

The Charitable Company has elected to apply the provisions of Section 11 'Basic Financial Instruments' and Section 12 'Other Financial Instruments Issues' of FRS 102 to all of its financial instruments.

Basic financial assets, which include trade and other receivables and cash and bank balances, are initially measured at transaction price including transaction costs and are subsequently carried at amortised cost using the effective interest method, unless the arrangement constitutes a financing transaction, where the transaction is measured at the present value of the future receipts discounted at a market rate of interest. Other financial assets classified as fair value through profit or loss are measured at fair value. They are subsequently carried at amortised cost, using the effective interest rate method.

Impairment of financial assets

Financial assets, other than those held at fair value through profit and loss, are assessed for indicators of impairment at each reporting end date.

Financial assets are impaired where there is objective evidence that, as a result of one or more events that occurred after the initial recognition of the financial asset, the estimated future cash flows have been affected. The impairment loss is recognised in profit or loss.

1.19. Financial liabilities

Basic financial liabilities are initially measured at transaction price, unless the arrangement constitutes a financing transaction, where the debt instrument is measured at the present value of the future payments discounted at a market rate of interest. Other financial liabilities classified as fair value through profit or loss are measured at fair value. They are subsequently carried at amortised cost, using the effective interest rate method.

1.20. Cash and cash equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents include cash in hand, deposits held at call with banks, other short-term liquid investments with original maturities of three months or less, and bank overdrafts. Bank overdrafts are shown within borrowings in current liabilities.

2. Critical accounting estimates and judgements

In the application of the charitable company's accounting policies, the Trustees are required to make judgements, estimates and assumptions about the carrying amount of assets and liabilities that are not readily apparent from other sources. The estimates and associated assumptions are based on historical experience and other factors that are considered to be relevant. Actual results may differ from these estimates.

The estimates and underlying assumptions are reviewed on an ongoing basis. Revisions to accounting estimates are recognised in the period in which the estimate is revised, if the revision affects only that period, or in the period of the revision and future periods if the revision affects both current and future periods.

Key sources of estimation uncertainty

Useful economic lives of intangible fixed assets

The annual amortisation charge for intangible fixed assets is sensitive to changes in the estimated useful economic lives and residual values of the assets. The useful economic lives and residual values are re-assessed annually. See note 13 for the carrying amount of the intangible fixed assets and note 1 for the useful economic lives for each class of asset.

Useful economic lives of tangible fixed assets

The annual depreciation charge for tangible fixed assets is sensitive to changes in the estimated useful economic lives and residual values of the assets. The useful economic lives and residual values are re-assessed annually. They are amended when necessary to reflect current estimates, based on technological advancement, future investments, economic utilisation and the physical condition of the assets. See note 14 for the carrying amount of the tangible fixed assets and note 1 for the useful economic lives for each class of asset.

Defined benefit pension scheme

Management's estimate of the defined benefit pension obligation is based on a number of critical underlying assumptions such as standard rates of inflation, mortality and discount rate. Variation in these assumptions may significantly impact the defined benefit obligation amount and the annual defined benefit expenses (as analysed in Note 11).

3. Income - Donations and legacies

	Unrestricted income (£)	Restricted income (£)	Endowment (£)	2022 (£)	2021 (£)
Membership income	1,442,654	2,000	-	1,444,654	1,442,332
Grants and donations	244,549	33,249	-	277,798	1,267,850
Legacies	839,942	68,865	-	908,807	1,441,232
	2,527,145	104,114	-	2,631,259	4,151,414

The 2021 comparative figures include £3,323,448 unrestricted income. The balance of £777,966 – grants and donations and £50,000 – legacies are restricted income.

4. Income - Charitable activities

	Unrestricted income (£)	Restricted income (£)	Endowment (£)	2022 (£)	2021 (£)
Primary purpose activities	801,638	784,005	-	1,585,643	1,262,048
People and wildlife	373,860	2,027	-	375,887	205,009
Conservation grants	451,532	268,165	-	719,697	700,232
Local groups	5,300	4,050	-	9,350	16,180
	1,632,330	1,058,247	-	2,690,577	2,183,469

The 2021 comparative figures include £2,038,346 unrestricted income. The balance of £11,217 – primary purpose activities and £133,906 - conservation grants are restricted income.

5. Income - Other trading activities

	Unrestricted income (£)	Restricted income (£)	Endowment (£)	2022 (£)	2021 (£)
Trading company - EECOS	298,210	-	-	298,210	271,105
Trading company - EWS	2,405,271	-	-	2,405,271	1,602,446
Fundraising events	11,155	400	-	11,555	8,618
	2,714,636	400	-	2,715,036	1,882,169

The 2021 comparative figure of £1,882,169 all relates to unrestricted income.

6. Income from investments

	Unrestricted income (£)	Restricted income (£)	Endowment (£)	2022 (£)	2021 (£)
Dividends received	113,148	126,650	82,952	322,750	395,974
Interest received	23,242	2,809	-	26,051	2,241
	136,390	129,459	82,952	348,801	398,215

The 2021 comparative figures for dividends received include £185,293 unrestricted income, £128,793 restricted income and £81,888 endowment income. The comparative figures for interest received include £767 unrestricted income and £1,474 restricted income.

7. Expenditure on Charitable Activities

	Unrestricted funds (£)	Restricted funds (£)	Endowment funds (£)	Totals 2022 (£)	2021 (£) (restated)
Reserves and Conservation	1,258,297	1,254,235	72,092	2,584,624	2,567,058
Visitor centres' costs	2,003,816	56,355	-	2,060,171	1,683,627
People and Wildlife	1,140,014	113,162	-	1,253,176	865,827
	4,402,127	1,423,752	72,092	5,897,971	5,116,512

The 2021 comparative figures for reserves and conservation include £1,707,661 unrestricted expenditure, £772,131 restricted expenditure and £87,266 endowment expenditure. The comparative figures for visitor centres' costs include £1,683,627 unrestricted expenditure. The comparative figures for people and wildlife include £865,827 unrestricted expenditure.

8. Expenditure on fundraising

	Unrestricted funds (£)	Restricted funds (£)	Endowment funds (£)	Totals 2022 (£)	2021 (£)
Costs of generating funds					
Voluntary income	960,059	8,042	-	968,101	952,996
Activities for raising funds					
Fundraising events	343,511	-	-	343,511	374,553
Trading company - EECOS	287,951	-	-	287,951	236,010
Trading company - EWS	2,265,352	-	-	2,265,352	1,658,754
Investment management	-	11,230	-	11,230	12,184
	3,856,873	19,272	-	3,876,145	3,234,497

The 2021 comparative figures include £3,222,313 unrestricted expenditure. The balance of £12,184 investment management costs are restricted expenditure.

9. Total expenditure

Allocations as Notes 9 (i)

	Direct costs (£)	Support costs (£)	Totals 2022 (£)	Direct costs (£)	Support costs (£)	Totals 2021 (£) (restated)
Expenditure on Charitable activities						
Reserves and Conservation	2,121,628	462,996	2,584,624	1,835,653	731,405	2,567,058
Visitor centres' costs	1,111,778	948,393	2,060,171	915,651	767,976	1,683,627
People and Wildlife	746,202	506,974	1,253,176	573,265	292,562	865,827
Expenditure on raising funds	3,585,976	290,169	3,876,145	2,960,220	274,277	3,234,497
Total	7,565,584	2,208,532	9,774,116	6,284,789	2,066,220	8,351,009

	2022 (£)	2021 (£) (restated)
Total resources expended are stated after charging		
Auditors' remuneration - Audit	38,750	33,000
- Other services	1,275	6,670
Depreciation/amortisation	628,671	475,432
Cost of stocks recognised as an expense	1,015,044	716,481
Profit on disposal of fixed assets	-	(44,600)
Amounts payable under operating leases	10,144	8,772

9 (i) Allocation of General Support costs

The breakdown of general support costs and how these were allocated between charitable and fundraising activities is shown in the tables below.

Support costs are allocated to the expenditure headings in the SOFA on the basis of the number of full time equivalent employees in each area of work.

	Total Support costs allocated for the year to 31 December 2022 (£)	Allocation			
		Reserves and conservation (£)	Visitor centre costs (£)	People and Wildlife (£)	Activities for fundraising (£)
Indirect staff costs	1,192,960	250,092	512,283	273,847	156,738
Office costs	510,515	107,024	219,227	117,190	67,074
Insurance premiums	112,880	23,664	48,473	25,912	14,831
Bank charges/(credits)	(5,223)	(1,095)	(2,243)	(1,199)	(686)
Telephone	2,422	508	1,040	556	318
Information technology	164,062	34,394	70,452	37,661	21,555
RSWT contribution	131,937	27,659	56,657	30,286	17,335
Professional fees	98,979	20,750	42,504	22,721	13,004
Total General Support allocations 2022	2,208,532	462,996	948,393	506,974	290,169
Full time equivalent staff for 2022	108	23	46	25	14

	Total Support costs allocated for the year to 31 December 2021 (£)	Allocation			
		Reserves and conservation (£)	Visitor centre costs (£)	People and Wildlife (£)	Activities for fundraising (£)
Indirect staff costs	1,097,756	388,585	408,016	155,435	145,720
Office costs	553,996	196,105	205,910	78,442	73,539
Insurance premiums	70,681	25,020	26,271	10,008	9,382
Bank charges	4,248	1,504	1,579	601	564
Telephone	33,264	11,775	12,363	4,710	4,416
Information technology	90,210	31,933	33,529	12,773	11,975
RSWT contribution	120,212	42,553	44,681	17,021	15,957
Professional fees	95,853	33,930	35,627	13,572	12,724
Total General Support allocations 2021	2,066,220	731,405	767,976	292,562	274,277
Full time equivalent staff for 2021	113	40	42	16	15

10. Staff costs

	2022 (£)	2021 (£)
Staff costs		
Salaries and wages	4,175,672	3,786,987
Social security costs	378,972	315,747
Other pension costs	182,959	173,023
Total	4,737,603	4,275,757

	2022	2021
Employees and volunteers		
The average number of full-time equivalent employees analysed by function was		
People and wildlife	18	16
Landscape conservation	26	31
Central support	29	28
Fundraising, membership and marketing	15	15
Centre management	9	10
Subsidiary companies	44	41
Total	141	141

The Trust relies on volunteers to help in all aspects of our work particularly for practical conservation work, administration and fundraising. It has not been possible to place a value on the work carried out by volunteers but were it possible, the amount would be significant.

Board's and employees' emoluments

Costs incurred by the Board travelling on Trust business and reimbursed to them amounted to £nil (2021: nil). The number of Board members reimbursed during the year was £nil (2021: nil).

The number of employees whose annual emoluments were £60,000 or more were:

	2022	2021
£60,000-£69,999	5	1
£70,000-£79,999	-	1
£80,000-£89,999	1	-

Total remuneration of the 6 (2021: 7) members of the senior management team - these being the Trust's key management personnel - in the period was £476,103 (2021: £489,089).

11. Pension arrangements

The Trust participates in two pension schemes; one is the Wildlife Trusts Pension Scheme (WTPS) a multi-employer scheme for the benefit of the staff of the wildlife trusts throughout the United Kingdom. The second scheme was created in 2014 to meet the requirements of the Auto Enrolment pensions legislation so that all staff have access to a pension scheme. The pension arrangements in place for all staff incorporate Life Assurance cover of not less than three times their basic salary.

During 2022 the contributions for the staff pension scheme amounted to £182,959 (2021: £173,023).

The WTPS has two sections, the Defined Benefit section (DB) and the Defined Contribution section (DC). The Trust's membership of the Scheme consists of past and present members of Essex Wildlife Trust staff, of which 6 are in the DB section and 149 are in the DC section. The DB section was closed to new members and future accrual on 30 September 2005. But as the Scheme carried a funding deficit at the date of closure, and a funding deficit has been declared at each actuarial valuation since, the Trust must continue to contribute to the pension fund along with the other wildlife trust employers in the Scheme.

The funding position on an FRS 102 basis as at 31 December 2022 shows a surplus of c£18,800. This is a deterioration of the surplus of c£25,700 disclosed as at 31 December 2021. The main reasons for the worsening in the funding position are:

- Asset performance has been lower than expected;
- Actual inflation experience has been significantly higher than assumed.

This has been partially offset by:

- A rise in the yield on high quality corporate bonds which has led to a large decrease in the liability value;
- Deficit contributions paid during the year.

Essex Wildlife Trust continues with its financial planning based on the deficit shown by the most recent formal actuarial valuation of the Scheme as at 31 March 2022. The Trust has continued to make deficit recovery payments that are being recovered from the 12 participating employers over the 10 years to 2026 or until the deficit is neutralised, if sooner in accordance with the deficit recovery plan agreed after the 2019 actuarial valuation. The Essex Wildlife Trust's proportion of any funding deficit presently stands at 5.15%.

Principal assumptions

	At 31 December 2022 per annum	At 31 December 2021 per annum
Discount rate	4.74%	1.80%
Retail Prices Index (RPI) Inflation	3.31%	3.30%
Consumer Prices Index (CPI) Inflation	2.57%	2.45%
Future increases to deferred pensions	2.57%	2.45%
Rate of increase to pensions in payment:		
Fixed 5% pa	5.00%	5.00%
RPI max 5% pa	3.10%	3.10%
Mortality (before and after retirement)	Males: 96% of S3PA Females: 95% of S3PA CMI_2021 with a long term rate of 1.25% pa; Initial addition to improvements of 0.5% and w2021 of 5%.	Males: 96% of S3PA Females: 95% of S3PA CMI_202 with a long term rate of 1.25% pa; Initial addition to improvements of 0.5% and w2020 of 15%.
Cash commutation	Members assumed to take 25% of their pension as tax free cash, subject to HMRC restrictions, using cash commutation factors currently in force.	Members assumed to take 25% of their pension as tax free cash, subject to HMRC restrictions, using cash commutation factors currently in force.
Life expectancy of a male aged 65 at the Balance Sheet Date	22.5	22.4
Life expectancy of a male aged 65 in 20 years from the Balance Sheet date	23.8	23.6
Life expectancy of a female aged 65 at the Balance Sheet Date	24.9	24.8
Life expectancy of a female aged 65 in 20 years from the Balance Sheet Date	26.3	26.3

For the avoidance of doubt, the financial assumptions above are in absolute terms. They are single equivalent rates, however in practice full yield curves are used.

Asset breakdown

The major categories of Scheme assets as a percentage of total Scheme assets are:

	At 31 December 2022	At 31 December 2021
UK Equities	0.0%	4.4%
Overseas Equities	24.3%	31.0%
Diversified Growth Funds	0.0%	22.6%
UK Government Fixed Interest Bonds	7.6%	13.7%
UK Government Index Linked Bonds	15.7%	15.6%
UK Corporate Bonds	30.7%	9.2%
Property	2.9%	2.3%
Cash	1.6%	1.2%
LDI	17.2%	0.0%
Total	100.00%	100.00%

The pension scheme has not invested in any of Essex Wildlife Trust's own financial instruments, nor in properties or other assets used by Essex Wildlife Trust. The assets are all quoted in active markets.

Net defined benefit asset (liability)

	At 31 December 2022 (£'s)	At 31 December 2021 (£'s)
Fair value of Scheme assets	640,814	960,931
Present value of defined benefit obligation	622,047	935,253
Defined benefit asset/(liability) recognised in balance sheet	18,767	25,678

Total expense recognised in the SOFA

	At 31 December 2022 (£'s)	At 31 December 2021 (£'s)
Current service cost	0	0
Administration expenses	19,262	8,609
Past service costs including curtailments	0	0
Effect of settlements	0	0
Recognised in arriving at operating profit	19,262	8,609
Interest on the net defined benefit liability	(681)	1,599
Total recognised in the SOFA	18,581	10,208

Total amounts taken to Other Comprehensive Income

	At 31 December 2022 (£'s)	At 31 December 2021 (£'s)
Actual return on Scheme assets - gains and (losses)	(319,667)	70,148
less: amounts included in net interest on the net defined benefit liability	(17,120)	(11,081)
Remeasurement gains and (losses) - Return on Scheme assets excluding interest income	(336,787)	59,067
Remeasurement gains and (losses) - actuarial gains and (losses)	304,656	79,132
Remeasurement gain/(loss) recognised in Other Comprehensive Income	(32,131)	138,199

Changes in the present value of the defined benefit obligation

	At 31 December 2022 (£'s)	At 31 December 2021 (£'s)
Present value of defined benefit obligation at beginning of period	935,253	1,027,008
Benefits paid including expenses	(44,251)	(33,912)
Current service cost	0	0
Administration costs	19,262	8,609
Interest cost	16,439	12,680
Remeasurement (gains) and losses - actuarial (gains) and losses	(304,656)	(79,132)
Employee contributions	0	0
Past service costs including curtailments	0	0
Effect of settlements	0	0
Present value of defined benefit obligation at end of period	622,047	935,253

Changes in the fair value of assets

	At 31 December 2022 (£'s)	At 31 December 2021 (£'s)
Fair value of Scheme assets at beginning of period	960,931	882,170
Interest income	17,120	11,081
Remeasurement gains and (losses) - Return on scheme assets excluding interest income	(336,787)	59,067
Contributions by Employer	43,801	42,525
Employee contributions	0	0
Benefits paid including expenses	(44,251)	(33,912)
Fair value of Scheme assets at end of period	640,814	960,931

12. Funders

Essex Wildlife Trust is extremely grateful for the grants which have been received during 2022 from the following funders:

- Biffa Award
- Active Essex Foundation
- Community 360
- National Highways
- People's Postcode Lottery
- Branch Out
- National Lottery Heritage Fund
- Anglian Water
- The John Swire (1989) Charitable Trust
- The ROSCA Trust
- The Simon Gibson Charitable Trust
- The Wildflower Society

This list is not exhaustive. Essex Wildlife Trust is very grateful to all its generous funders.

13. Intangible assets

Group and charity

	Computer software (£) (restated)	Total (£) (restated)
Cost or donated value		
1 January 2022	46,809	46,809
Additions	-	-
Disposals	(22,386)	(22,386)
Transfer from tangible assets	11,911	11,911
At 31 December 2022	36,334	36,334
Amortisation		
1 January 2022	43,066	43,066
Charge for the year	6,025	6,025
Disposals	(22,386)	(22,386)
Transfer from tangible assets	8,452	8,452
At 31 December 2022	35,157	35,157
Net book value		
At 31 December 2022	1,177	1,177
At 31 December 2021	3,743	3,743

14. Tangible assets

Group (restated)

	Freehold & leasehold land (£)	Freehold buildings (£)	Office equipment (£)	Plant, equipment & external works (£)	Total (£)
Cost or donated value					
1 January 2022	5,118,779	12,306,348	331,813	2,532,349	20,289,289
Additions	-	18,139	19,178	497,630	534,947
Disposals	-	-	(111,441)	(80,137)	(191,578)
Transfer to intangibles	(147,097)	(262,034)	(96,725)	493,945	(11,911)
At 31 December 2022	4,971,682	12,062,453	142,825	3,443,787	20,620,747
Depreciation					
1 January 2022	-	2,863,550	232,802	1,850,259	4,946,611
Charge for the year	-	286,966	13,784	321,896	622,646
Disposals	-	-	(111,441)	(80,137)	(191,578)
Transfer to intangibles	-	(123,782)	(21,996)	137,326	(8,452)
At 31 December 2022	-	3,026,734	113,149	2,229,344	5,369,227
Net book value					
At 31 December 2022	4,971,682	9,035,719	29,676	1,214,443	15,251,520
At 31 December 2021	5,118,779	9,442,798	99,011	682,090	15,342,678

Tangible assets

Charity (restated)

	Freehold & leasehold land (£)	Freehold buildings (£)	Office equipment (£)	Plant, equipment & external works	Total (£)
Cost or donated value					
1 January 2022	5,118,777	12,306,348	306,838	2,087,200	19,819,163
Additions	-	18,139	19,178	428,771	466,088
Disposals	-	-	(111,441)	-	(111,441)
Transfer to intangibles	(147,097)	(262,034)	(96,725)	493,945	(11,911)
At 31 December 2022	4,971,680	12,062,453	117,850	3,009,916	20,161,899
Depreciation					
1 January 2022	-	2,863,550	211,397	1,594,172	4,669,119
Charge for the year	-	286,966	13,784	250,987	551,737
Disposals	-	-	(111,441)	-	(111,441)
Transfer to intangibles	-	(123,782)	(21,996)	137,326	(8,452)
At 31 December 2022	-	3,026,734	91,744	1,982,485	5,100,963
Net book value					
At 31 December 2022	4,971,680	9,035,719	26,106	1,027,431	15,060,936
At 31 December 2021	5,118,777	9,442,798	95,441	493,028	15,150,044

15. Long Term Investments Group

	2022 (£)	2021 (£)
Quoted investments – market values	12,110,189	13,921,304
Cash held as part of the portfolio	-	650,675
	12,110,189	14,571,979

The movement on investments is as follows:

	2022 (£)	2021 (£)
Market value at 1 January	14,571,979	13,400,651
Additions at cost	-	316,253
Disposals at market value	(659,582)	(120,000)
Unrealised (losses)/gains	(1,802,208)	975,075
Market value at 31 December	12,110,189	14,571,979
Historic Cost at 31 December	12,206,252	12,859,927

Investments comprise:

	2022 (£)	2021 (£)
Fixed interest securities	1,411,865	1,149,992
UK Equities	2,240,346	2,595,979
Overseas Equities	5,730,849	7,513,345
Property Funds	522,572	500,108
Other	2,204,557	2,812,555
	12,110,189	14,571,979

There were no investments within the portfolio that could have been considered to be material in the context of the value of the portfolio.

15. Long Term Investments Charity

	2022 (£)	2021 (£)
Quoted investments – market values	8,405,264	9,651,095
Cash held as part of the portfolio	-	618,120
Essex Ecology Services Limited share capital	2	2
	8,405,266	10,269,217

The movement on investments is as follows:

	2022 (£)	2021 (£)
Market value at 1 January	10,269,217	9,447,656
Additions at cost	-	272,508
Disposals at market value	(627,027)	(120,000)
Unrealised (losses)/gains	(1,236,924)	669,053
Market value at 31 December	8,405,266	10,269,217
Historic Cost at 31 December	8,464,335	9,082,455

Investments comprise

	2022 (£)	2021 (£)
Fixed interest securities	976,571	795,436
UK Equities	1,549,621	1,795,609
Overseas Equities	3,963,962	5,196,894
Property Funds	361,457	345,919
Other	1,553,655	2,135,359
	8,405,266	10,269,217

There were no investments within the portfolio that could have been considered to be material in the context of the value of the portfolio.

Essex Wildlife Trust Limited has four subsidiaries, two of which are limited by share capital and two of which are limited by guarantee, which are incorporated in England. The share capital above consists of 2 ordinary shares of £1 each held for Essex Ecology Services Limited. The share capital of Essex Wildlife Sales Limited was initially set up and then donated to the Trust. No account is taken of the value of this gift in the financial statements.

Further details concerning the activities and assets of these companies are given in notes 23 & 24.

16. Debtors

	Group		Charity	
	2022 (£)	2021 (£)	2022 (£)	2021 (£)
Trade debtors	229,046	107,827	82,969	22,133
Amounts due from Group undertakings	-	-	921,337	768,368
Legacies	691,483	1,150,078	691,483	1,150,078
Prepayments and accrued income	312,123	183,770	242,815	96,560
Other debtors	769,846	402,763	769,848	402,765
	2,002,498	1,844,438	2,708,452	2,439,904

Financial instruments included in the above group debtor balances amount to £1,591,552 (2021: £1,607,171) and above charity debtor balances amount to £2,366,814 (2021: £2,289,847).

17. Short Term Investments

Current assets

	2022 (£)	2021 (£)
Group and charity		
Short term deposits	1,834,530	2,063,165

18. Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year

	Group		Charity	
	2022 (£)	2021 (£)	2022 (£)	2021 (£)
Trade creditors	448,967	211,076	392,090	165,153
Amounts due from Group undertakings	-	-	391,693	217,880
Taxes and social security costs	156,571	59,975	92,330	-
Accruals and deferred income	372,444	217,049	330,272	187,564
	977,982	488,100	1,206,385	570,597

19. Creditors: Amounts falling due after more than one year

	Group		Charity	
	2022 (£)	2021 (£)	2022 (£)	2021 (£)
Within 2 to 5 years	50,000	50,000	50,000	50,000
Over 5 years	22,337	28,330	22,337	28,330
Total	72,337	78,330	72,337	78,330

Financial instruments, included in notes 18 and 19 for the above group creditor balances, amount to £521,304 (2021: £289,406) and above charity creditor balances amount to £856,120 (2021: £461,363).

20. Designated funds

Group and charity

These funds have been set aside for projects that are not fully funded by restricted income. Any unspent funds will be spent over the coming years as the expenditure for which these funds have been set aside is incurred.

	Balance 1 January 2022 (£)	Incomings (£)	Outgoings / Undesignations (£)	Balance 31 December 2022 (£)
Designated funds - projects				
Abberton Fit Out	47,950	-	-	47,950
Blue House Farm improvements	14,648	-	(14,383)	265
Brookes Reserve	1,685	-	-	1,685
Colne Point Bridge insurance claim	50,415	-	(50,415)	-
Education projects	39,461	-	-	39,461
Emergency / asset replacement	50,993	-	(16,716)	34,277
Express Wish	70,802	37,500	(70,802)	37,500
General Projects	282,294	15,791	(245,091)	52,994
Howlands	35,000	-	-	35,000
Ingrebourne laptops insurance claim	13,178	-	(13,178)	-
Interpretation fund	163,402	-	(141,808)	21,594
Landscape conservation projects	(15,792)	-	15,792	-
Langdon project	300,000	-	(237,588)	62,412
Legacy A Hollands Langdon area	248,610	-	(248,610)	-
Legacy J Pickford	2,114,937	186	(2,115,123)	-
Legacy C Will Abberton	9,860	-	(9,860)	-
Lower Raypits	2,596	-	(2,398)	198
Pound and Tile Wood	79,973	1,524	(6,277)	75,220
Recognition of legators	15,608	-	(15,608)	-
Records centre	128,955	21,787	-	150,742
Total designated funds	3,654,575	76,788	(3,172,065)	559,298

20. Designated funds

Group and charity

Abberton Fit Out

The Trustees agreed to set aside £100,000 for interpretation and fittings at the new Abberton centre.

Blue House Farm improvements

This is a fund to support development and improvements at the Blue House Farm Nature Reserve.

Brookes Reserve

This nature reserve was held leasehold by the Trust however the former owner donated the freehold to the Trust together with these funds which the Trustees agreed to hold in a designated fund for Brookes Reserve.

Colne Point Bridge insurance claim

These funds have been allocated by the Trustees to allow the repair to the bridge on which the claim was based.

Education projects

These funds have been designated for the Senior Management team who represent the projects task group, to authorise for specific educational projects that are prioritised in conjunction with the strategic and operational plan to enable achievement of the Trusts charitable education objectives.

Emergency / asset replacement

These funds have been designated by the Board for the CEO to authorise purchase of replacement assets in an emergency situation.

Express Wish

These funds have been designated by the Board to be allocated in line with the legators wishes. If a suitable project is not found within 2 years of receipt of the funds, then the Trustees will reconsider the allocation of these funds.



General Projects

These funds have been allocated by the Trustees to a number of projects to match other funds to ensure these projects can go ahead in the near future.

Howlands

This has been designated because the donor, who enabled the Trust to purchase Howlands, also donated £50,000 which the Trustees have decided to use as future support for this nature reserve.

Ingrebourne laptops insurance claim

This is the receipt of insurance monies for stolen laptops which will be used to purchase new laptops.

Interpretation fund

These funds have been allocated by the Trustees to implement the new interpretation strategy which links with the marketing strategy and charitable objectives.

Landscape conservation projects

These funds have been designated by the Board for the Projects tasks group to authorise and allocate to specific landscape conservation projects which are considered to be out of core budget but are thought to be important to achieve the charities conservation objectives.

Langdon project

This is a fund to support the 2020 rebuild of the Langdon Nature Discovery Centre.

Legacy A Holland Langdon area

A fund to support work in the Langdon area from the A Hollands legacy.

Legacy J Pickford

This is the money and property received from the estate of Joan Pickford – also referred to as Stone Hall. This legacy was treated as a designated fund and has been reclassified as a restricted fund to reflect the nature of the gift. The movement to restricted funds has been a transfer transaction between funds in 2022.

Legacy C Wills

Abberton - is a designated fund for the purpose of the money from a deed of variation from the estate of the late Colin Wills where it was agreed for the money to be used on various items for the benefit of Abberton Nature Discovery Park (including a new oak pond dipping platform).

Lower Raypits

The Trust has undertaken major works at this Nature Reserve and these funds are what remain to complete the works.

Pound and Tile Wood

These funds have been donated to the Trust and the Trustees have designated them for these particular nature reserves.

Recognition of legators

These are funds that the Board has authorised the project task group to use to recognise the contribution of legators e.g. to fund plaques and benches etc.

Records centre

These funds have been allocated by the Trustees to further support the development and long term viability of the records centre.

21. Restricted Income funds

Group and charity

These funds were received for specific projects.

	Balance 1 January 2022 (£) (restated)	Incoming funds (£)	Outgoings transfers (£)	Balance 31 December 2022 (£)
Abberton reserve	67,152	17,500	(10,728)	73,924
Biodiversity Project	68,302	350	(75,121)	(6,469)
Blue House Farm BIFFA	(12,000)	180,572	(141,045)	27,527
Catchment Restoration Fund	12,635	-	(12,635)	-
Coopers Wood	48,003	-	-	48,003
Cory Colchester	72,300	-	(72,312)	(12)
Fingringhoe reserve	15,750	-	(15,750)	-
Hanningfield Wardening	7,614	14,000	(27,224)	(5,610)
Land purchase fund	108,163	-	-	108,163
Land purchase - Blue House Farm	31,985	-	-	31,985
Langdon Lake and Meadows	31,603	5,000	(28,299)	8,304
Langdon restoration project	(201,874)	44,166	206,279	48,571
Legacy - I Cotgrove	50,375	-	(13,603)	36,772
Legacy - D Weston	182,856	-	189	183,045
Legacy - C Fenner	48,675	-	(4,096)	44,579
Legacy - A Holland	-	-	246,971	246,971
Legacy - J Pickford	-	543	2,111,962	2,112,505
Other legacies	76,052	29,184	(1,000)	104,236
Oakfield Wood	42,393	-	-	42,393
Oliver Road Lagoons	1,525	25,679	(48,055)	(20,851)
Records centre	21,667	-	(21,667)	-
ReMedies	17,140	3,500	(432)	20,208
Reptile Relocation Project	(72,924)	-	72,924	-
Saltmarsh restoration	21,518	-	-	21,518
Tendering Loves Conservation	23,172	100,778	(104,246)	19,704
The Naze	11,160	-	(7,868)	3,292
Thameside Nature Park	52,880	-	-	52,880
Valerie Wells Wood	153,965	-	(22,679)	131,286
Water for Wildlife	47,016	51,932	(67,336)	31,612
Fund Balances - less than 10,000	40,239	274,734	(77,151)	237,822
Fixed Asset Fund - assets purchased from restricted funds	11,977,882	132,117	(350,762)	11,759,237
Total for the charity	12,945,224	880,055	1,536,316	15,361,595
Chafford Gorges Limited	4,393,586	130,406	(677,528)	3,846,464
Thameside Nature Park Limited	491,009	281,759	(115,285)	657,483
Total for the group	17,829,819	1,292,220	743,503	19,865,542

Restricted Income funds

Group and charity

These projects may arise out of the Trust's ongoing activities, or the Trust may be asked to carry out a specific task. Either way, at some stage in the project, grants and donations will have been received specific to that project. Therefore once a project is commenced, any funds allocated to it are restricted to that fund. It is anticipated that these funds will be used over the coming months and years as the expenditure for which these funds were raised is incurred. There are therefore many small funds and for the purposes of statutory reporting these have been grouped together under one main heading.

With the exception of those detailed below, the restricted income funds are to be used for capital works or management on the reserve or project specified by the donor.

The Fixed Assets Fund relates to fixed assets acquired from restricted funds.

The Chafford Gorges fund is for managing the reserve at Chafford Gorges, Grays.

The Thameside Nature Park fund is for managing the reserve at Mucking, Thurrock.

The Langdon Restoration Project is in respect of the Nature Discovery Centre at Langdon opened in Summer 2021 and a review of the overall fund is due to take place regarding the final funds balance.

22. Endowment funds

Group and charity

These are funds which will have arisen from an appeal, from a specific donation, or from grants. Permanent endowments must be retained with the income used for the purpose for which it was given to the Trust whereas expendable endowments can be utilised once the trustees consider it appropriate.

	Balance 1 January 2022 (£)	Incoming funds (£)	Outgoings funds (£)	Balance 31 December 2022 (£)
Langdon Dowsett	296,933	7,582	(38,910)	265,605
Joan Elliot	2,392,102	61,084	(313,465)	2,139,721
Holland and Arthur	559,455	14,286	(62,452)	511,289
Total	3,248,490	82,952	(414,827)	2,916,615

The Langdon Dowsett fund is to be used to part fund the running of the Langdon reserve.

The Joan Elliot Fund is to be used for the running of Abbots Hall Farm and Reserve; any surplus may be used towards core funding.

The Holland and Arthur fund is to be used to manage (or purchase or put towards a purchase of) land in the District of Tendring.

23. Trading companies

The trading activities of the Trust are carried out through wholly owned subsidiary companies, Essex Wildlife Sales Limited (EWS) company number 02548617 and Essex Ecology Services Limited (EECOS) company number 02853947. Both companies gift aid their taxable profits across to the Trust.

EWS operates shops and catering in all our Nature Discovery Centres.

EECOS offers environmental project consultancy services.

Profit and Loss Accounts

	EWS		EECOS	
	2022 (£)	2021 (£)	2022 (£)	2021 (£)
Turnover	2,405,271	1,602,446	298,210	271,105
Cost of sales	(1,015,044)	(715,257)	(234,353)	(210,084)
Gross profit	1,390,227	887,189	63,857	61,021
Administrative expenses	(1,391,506)	(1,122,691)	(55,807)	(47,640)
Other operating income	4,000	259,610	-	-
Interest payable	-	(18,415)	-	-
	2,721	5,693	8,050	13,381
Gift aided profits to Essex Wildlife Trust	-	-	(8,050)	(13,381)
Reserves brought forward	(366,734)	(372,427)	-	-
Reserves carried forward	(364,013)	(366,734)	-	-

Balance Sheets

	EWS		EECOS	
	2022 (£)	2021 (£)	2022 (£)	2021 (£)
Tangible fixed assets	89,231	71,667	-	2,173
Current assets	427,778	319,862	164,437	118,998
Current liabilities	(881,020)	(758,261)	(164,435)	(121,169)
Total net assets	(364,011)	(366,732)	2	2
Represented by profit and loss reserves	(364,013)	(366,734)	-	-
Represented by share capital	2	2	2	2

24. Subsidiary charities

Chafford Gorges Limited (company number 05189256, charity number 1113511), a company limited by guarantee, is also a registered charity over which the Essex Wildlife Trust has full control. The charity manages and operates the area of land known as Chafford Gorges Nature Park in Grays Thurrock, excluding the Nature Discovery Centre on the site, which is operated by the Trust.

Thameside Nature Park Limited (company number 07151955, charity number 1137142), which is also a company limited by guarantee, is also a registered charity over which the Essex Wildlife Trust has full control. The charity manages and operates the area of land known as Thameside Nature Park at Mucking, excluding the Nature Discovery Centre on the site, which is operated by the Trust.

Summaries taken from the accounts for the two charities for the year ended 31 December 2022 appear below.

Statement of Financial Activities

	Chafford Gorges		Thameside Nature Park	
	2022 (£)	2021 (£)	2022 (£)	2021 (£)
Incoming resources	130,406	139,708	281,759	135,682
Resources expended	(119,141)	(109,447)	(121,150)	(142,797)
Net incoming/(outgoing) resources	11,265	30,261	160,609	(7,115)
(Losses)/gains on investments	(565,284)	306,022	-	-
Net movement in funds for the year	(554,019)	336,283	160,609	(7,115)
Reserves brought forward	4,330,449	3,994,166	331,903	339,018
Reserves carried forward	3,776,430	4,330,449	492,512	331,903

Balance Sheets

	Chafford Gorges		Thameside Nature Park	
	2022 (£)	2021 (£)	2022 (£)	2021 (£)
Tangible fixed assets	14,523	17,371	86,830	101,423
Investments at market value	3,704,925	4,270,209	-	-
	3,719,448	4,287,580	86,830	101,423
Current assets	91,026	60,043	410,810	237,957
Current liabilities	(34,044)	(17,174)	(5,128)	(7,477)
Total net assets	3,776,430	4,330,449	492,512	331,903
Represented by unrestricted funds	3,774,603	4,324,970	475,823	331,903
Represented by restricted funds	1,827	5,479	16,689	-

25. Analysis of net assets between funds

Group

	Unrestricted Funds (£)	Restricted Funds (£)	Endowment Funds (£)	Totals 2022 (£)
2022				
Intangible fixed assets	1,177	-	-	1,177
Tangible fixed assets	2,887,311	11,860,590	503,619	15,251,520
Long-term investments	6,076,276	3,704,925	2,328,988	12,110,189
Current assets	359,475	4,338,326	84,008	4,781,809
Current liabilities	(939,683)	(38,299)	-	(977,982)
Long term liabilities	(72,337)	-	-	(72,337)
Defined benefit pension	18,767	-	-	18,767
Total net assets	8,330,986	19,865,542	2,916,615	31,113,143

	Unrestricted Funds (£)	Restricted Funds (£)	Endowment Funds (£)	Totals 2021 (£)
2021 - (restated)				
Intangible fixed assets	3,743	-	-	3,743
Tangible fixed assets	2,746,002	12,096,676	500,000	15,342,678
Long-term investments	7,423,751	4,302,764	2,845,464	14,571,979
Current assets	3,600,552	1,454,699	(96,974)	4,958,277
Current liabilities	(463,780)	(24,320)	-	(488,100)
Long term liabilities	(78,330)	-	-	(78,330)
Defined benefit pension	25,678	-	-	25,678
Total net assets	13,257,616	17,829,819	3,248,490	34,335,925

Analysis of net assets between funds

Charity

	Unrestricted Funds (£)	Restricted Funds (£)	Endowment Funds (£)	Totals 2022 (£)
2022				
Intangible fixed assets	1,177	-	-	1,177
Tangible fixed assets	2,798,080	11,759,237	503,619	15,060,936
Long-term investments	6,076,278	-	2,328,988	8,405,266
Current assets	1,314,424	3,602,358	84,008	5,000,790
Current liabilities	(1,206,385)	-	-	(1,206,385)
Long term liabilities	(72,337)	-	-	(72,337)
Defined benefit pension	18,767	-	-	18,767
Total net assets	8,930,004	15,361,595	2,916,615	27,208,214

	Unrestricted Funds (£)	Restricted Funds (£)	Endowment Funds (£)	Totals 2021 (£)
2021 (restated)				
Intangible fixed assets	3,743	-	-	3,743
Tangible fixed assets	2,672,162	11,977,882	500,000	15,150,044
Long-term investments	7,423,753	-	2,845,464	10,269,217
Current assets	4,370,184	967,342	(96,974)	5,240,552
Current liabilities	(570,597)	-	-	(570,597)
Long term liabilities	(78,330)	-	-	(78,330)
Defined benefit pension	25,678	-	-	25,678
Total net assets	13,846,593	12,945,224	3,248,490	30,040,307

26. Members' guarantee

The Charity is a Company Limited by Guarantee and incorporated in England and Wales. In the event of its winding up or dissolution, if there remains, after the satisfaction of all its debts and liabilities, any property whatsoever, it shall not be paid to or distributed among the Members of the Trust but shall be given or transferred to some other institution or institutions having objects similar to the Trust or to some other charitable object.

The aforementioned are subject to further clauses as stated within the Company's Memorandum and Articles of Association.

Every member of the Trust undertakes to contribute to the assets of the Trust in the event of it being wound up, while he/she is a member, or within one year after he/she ceases to be a member, such amounts not exceeding one pound sterling.

27. Contingent liabilities

A legal charge created on 23 March 1987 amounting to £38,000 exists over a parcel of land included within the group's fixed assets.

The Trust participates in the Wildlife Trusts Pension Scheme, a multi-employer pension scheme, as described in Note 11. After the year ended 31 December 2021, the Trustees of the Trust were made aware of a potential issue relating to the defined benefit section of the Scheme. A detailed investigation is currently underway to establish the extent to which this could result in financial liability to Essex Wildlife Trust. The Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts (RSWT) is currently investigating whether additional payments to the Wildlife Trusts Pension Scheme by Essex Wildlife Trust are required to meet historic pension liabilities. RSWT's investigations may require legal proceedings against other third parties. The outcome of this process is not expected to be known for 12 to 24 months.

As it is not possible to reliably estimate the value of any potential liability, no provision has been made for this in the financial statements.

28. Commitments under operating leases

Group

At 31 December 2022 the group had non-cancellable commitments under operating leases expiring as follows:

	2022 (£)	2021 (£)
Expiring within 1 year	10,424	9,670
2-5 years	2,409	18,711
	12,833	28,381

Charity

At 31 December 2022 the charity had non-cancellable commitments under operating leases expiring as follows:

	2022 (£)	2021 (£)
Expiring within 1 year	8,672	7,918
2-5 years	2,117	16,667
Toal	10,789	24,585

29. (Deficit)/surplus for the financial year

As permitted by Section 408 of the Companies Act 2006, the parent charitable company's Statement of Financial Activities has not been included in these financial statements. The (deficit)/surplus for the financial year is made up as follows:

	2022 (£)	2021 (£) (restated)
Parent charitable company's surplus for the financial year	(2,832,093)	1,042,671

30. Comparative information

	Notes	Unrestricted (£)	Restricted income (£)	Endowment fund (£)	Total 2021 (£) (restated)
Incoming and endowments from					
Donations and legacies	3	3,323,448	827,966	-	4,151,414
Charitable activities	4	2,038,346	145,123	-	2,183,469
Other trading activities	5	1,882,169	-	-	1,882,169
Investments	6	186,060	130,267	81,888	398,215
Total		7,430,023	1,103,356	81,888	8,615,267
Expenditure on					
Charitable activities	7	4,257,115	772,131	87,266	5,116,512
Raising Funds	8	3,222,313	12,184	-	3,234,497
Total	9	7,479,428	784,315	87,266	8,351,009
Net losses on defined benefit					
Pension scheme	11	138,199	-	-	138,199
Net gains on investments					
	15	483,667	306,022	185,386	975,075
Net income and net movement in funds		572,461	625,063	180,008	1,377,532
Reconciliation of funds					
Total funds brought forward		12,685,155	17,204,756	3,068,482	32,958,393
Total funds carried forward	25	13,257,616	17,829,819	3,248,490	34,335,925

The statement of financial activities contains all gains and losses for the year and all activities relate to continuing operations. The profit for the purposes of the Companies Act 2006 is the net incoming resources before unrealised losses/gains.

31. Related party transactions

The charity has taken advantage of the exemptions confirmed by FRS102 not to disclose transactions with its wholly owned subsidiaries. There were no transactions with other related parties during the year.

32. Prior year restatement Charity Funds

	General Funds (£)	Designated Funds (£)	Restricted Funds (£)	Totals (£)
Summary of the prior year accounting				
Previous Reported Balance 2020	5,973,641	7,379,257	12,857,222	26,210,120
Depreciation Adjustment 2020	(32,847)	(8,603)	(123,073)	(164,523)
Adjustment to prior errors	-	(55,177)	(61,266)	(116,443)
Restated Closing Balance 31/12/2020	5,940,794	7,315,477	12,672,883	25,929,154
Restated Opening Balance 01/01/2021	5,940,794	7,315,477	12,672,883	25,929,154
Reported Fund Movement 2021	3,732,528	(3,724,682)	5,129,696	5,137,542
Depreciation Adjustment 2021	4,073	(11,700)	23,545	15,918
Adjustment to prior errors	-	1,126	3,695	4,821
Restated Closing Balance 31/12/2021	9,677,395	3,580,221	17,829,819	31,087,435

Restatement of 2020 and 2021 charity funds due to adoption of new depreciation policy and the correction of prior year errors.



Essex
Wildlife Trust