

Cheshire Wildlife Trust Conservation Strategy 2008–2013



“Creating a Living Landscape for Cheshire” Introducing our new Conservation Strategy

Cheshire Wildlife Trust’s Conservation Strategy will focus and prioritise our work for the years ahead. Initially covering a five-year period, the Conservation Strategy builds upon our successes so far and brings our plans for the future in line with the national Wildlife Trust’s Development Strategy.

Our Strategy is framed around four main aims designed to help us achieve our vision of ‘a Cheshire region richer in wildlife by 2020’. It incorporates our

approach to tackling issues such as climate change, maintenance of healthy natural ‘life-support’ systems (ecosystem services) and our need to work in partnership to achieve a ‘Living Landscape’ for the Cheshire region. Our Strategy also considers how we will engage everyone in caring for and understanding our natural environment and how we might live and work in a more sustainable way.

The four main aims identified by Cheshire Wildlife Trust are:

1. *To stand up for wildlife and the natural environment*
2. *To create and enhance wildlife havens*
3. *To inspire people about the natural world*
4. *To foster sustainable living*

These four aims are further divided into key work areas, which are detailed over-leaf, along with examples of our current work and plans for the future.



1

To stand up for wildlife and the natural environment



Our aim is to actively engage with partners and where possible take a lead in promoting landscape-scale conservation, and seek to positively influence planning and policy to protect wildlife in Cheshire.

What will our direction be?

Evidence gathering: We will work in partnership to gather robust biodiversity evidence and use this information to make informed decisions for the future creation and conservation of a living landscape.

Local wildlife sites – protection and monitoring: We will engage partners to help manage and monitor the Local Sites System (known locally as Sites of Biological Importance) to protect important areas for wildlife.

Land use planning and policy: We will defend wildlife sites in the planning system and encourage decision-making that promotes a natural landscape better able to cope with future challenges.

Land management – advocacy: We will offer good quality nature conservation advice and actively influence land managers to improve their practices.

Biodiversity action plan co-ordination: We will remain a key player in the Cheshire region Biodiversity Partnership to support the work of the Local Biodiversity Manager.

Taking action

- We are working with rECORd (the biological records centre for the Cheshire region) to address knowledge gaps and hope to launch a new joint project known as 'Natural Connections' very soon. The Natural Connections Project will help us work with our partners to develop ambitious conservation projects on a landscape scale.
- We will continue to develop our work with local authorities and volunteers to improve our Local Sites System, which currently protects over 700 Sites of Biological Importance across Cheshire, Warrington and Wirral.

1 continued...

- We are working to establish our Bickley Hall Farm headquarters as a model of how farming and wildlife can co-exist productively, providing a centre where our members and landowners can learn about best practice land management.

2

To create and enhance wildlife havens



Our aim is to create an environment in Cheshire richer in wildlife, to prevent further losses and to encourage appropriate management of wildlife havens.

What will our direction be?

Land acquisition: We will develop our land acquisition strategy to reflect climate change adaptation, the landscape-scale approach and local priority habitats.

Land management – best practice: We will improve the habitat quality, integrity and extent of CWT land holdings.

Local wildlife sites – management: We will advise owners and managers on the best practice management of Local Wildlife Sites.

Biodiversity Action Plan implementation: We will work in partnership to ensure the recovery of key habitats and species through targeted projects.

Taking action

- Cheshire Wildlife Trust currently manages 47 nature reserves including 19 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (of which three sites are of European Importance), a further 17 Sites of Biological Importance and one Regionally Important Geological Site. New land acquisition opportunities regularly come to light and over the next five years we will focus on expanding and connecting our existing reserves as well as seizing opportunities to safeguard vulnerable habitat fragments. In 2008 we expanded our Dane's Moss reserve by purchasing and initiating restoration of an additional 3.3 ha.

2 continued...

We are committed to continuing best practice management of our landholdings, and will review our choice of methods, including the use of grazing animals, to ensure we achieve the best results in the most cost-effective way.

- We will work in partnership to provide local wildlife site owners with management advice and gain a better understanding of how these dispersed habitat fragments contribute to creating ecological networks and achieving Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) targets.
- Cheshire Wildlife Trust is a key partner in BAP projects across the Cheshire region including the North West Lowlands Water Vole Project and Cheshire Dormouse Project. We will continue to initiate and be involved with projects that benefit local priority habitats and species paying particular attention to our special habitats such as ponds, meres and mosses.

3 To inspire people about the natural world



Our aim is to provide inspiring experiences of the natural world and enable people to take action in their local environment.

What will our direction be?

Understanding and passion for wildlife: We will provide opportunities for people to experience wildlife and encourage healthy living through promoting use of the countryside.

Inspirational experiences for young people: We will deliver Wildlife Watch and education projects to schools and colleges and embrace new technologies to promote the opportunities we provide.

Access to high quality, enjoyable experiences of wildlife habitats: We will inspire and enable people to engage with our nature reserves by improving on-site access and interpretation and by producing informative publications.

Develop and maximise volunteer potential: We will enable local people to engage in a range of voluntary activities that benefit them, their local community and the natural environment.

Taking action

- There are currently six Wildlife Watch Groups in Cheshire providing regular environmental activities for children. In addition, we run wildlife watching events for families such as pond dipping, bat walks, bird ringing and small mammal identification. Last year we inspired 1,600 children through our work with schools.

One of our projects was hosted jointly by Capesthorne Hall and Arley Hall, during which children from local schools took part in springtime woodland activities, where they learned about the beauty of our native bluebells, the threat to them from Spanish bluebells and of hybridisation.

We hope to increase our capacity and expertise to deliver many more education activities and projects over the next five years.

- We want to increase the number and variety of opportunities for our members and the public to become involved with our work. We currently run a highly successful training programme called 'Natural Know-How' and in 2008, 270 people benefited from our courses, studying subjects such as butterfly identification, wildflower identification and planning for wildlife, and wildlife photography.

Corporate volunteers and students regularly participate in team-building days at Bickley Hall Farm and out on our nature reserves. More formally there are nine local branches of Cheshire Wildlife Trust which run their own programme of events where both members and non-members can meet with other wildlife enthusiasts.

- We want our message to reach more people. In particular we will significantly improve access and interpretation at our nature reserves for the enjoyment of all and explore opportunities for a visitor centre, to make Cheshire Wildlife Trust more accessible to the people of Cheshire.

4 To foster sustainable living



Our aim is to demonstrate sustainable business principles, promote low impact living and encourage people to take action to achieve a secure environmental future.

Continued overleaf..

What will our direction be?

Sustainable buildings: We will ensure Bickley Hall Farm and any other Trust premises are operated on principles of sustainability.

Sustainable practices: We will ensure best practices are adopted throughout the Trust's activities to provide a positive example to others.

Sustainable living: We will actively promote changes in behaviour by all, towards achieving ways of living sustainably.

Wildlife gardening and allotments: We will increase public participation in wildlife gardening and promote local food initiatives.

Taking action

- We are committed as an organisation to taking action to reduce our eco/carbon footprint and to encourage individuals to act responsibly to help reduce climate change and live more sustainably. We see the review of our environmental policy as key to achieving this aim. We must first establish our own organisation's eco/carbon footprint and then develop actions and targets to reduce it.
- We will continue to champion sustainability at events such as One Earth and the Tatton RHS Show. Through our campaigns we will encourage people to embrace the philosophy of sustainable living by fostering behaviour changes and demonstrating good practice.
- Our wildlife garden at Bickley Hall Farm, created by volunteers, is currently an inspirational tool to promote the importance of gardens as a wildlife habitat and of organic local food production and healthy eating. We will promote wildlife gardening and local food production across the Cheshire region and inspire people with our message.

• FURTHER INFORMATION •

Cheshire Wildlife Trust:

If you would like more information on our Conservation Strategy or any other aspect of our work please contact us:

Cheshire Wildlife Trust,
Bickley Hall Farm, Bickley, Cheshire, SY14 8EF.
Tel: 01948 820728.
E-mail: cheshirewt@cix.co.uk.
Website: www.cheshirewildlifetrust.co.uk

The Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts:

Find out more about the work of The Wildlife Trusts nationally at www.wildlifetrusts.org.uk

Living Landscapes

The Wildlife Trusts have produced a joint document, which sets out what we need to do in order to achieve our vision of a living landscape, which can be downloaded for free.

A living landscape: A call to restore the UK's battered ecosystems, for wildlife and people by The Wildlife Trusts, Rupert Paul (Ed.), published by Cambrian Printers, Aberystwyth, (2006) is available from www.wildlifetrusts.org.uk/publications

