

#### **Introduction from the Chair of Trustees**

"The natural environment has never before been as prominent in the public eye. People across the country - and the world - are becoming more aware than ever of the decline in nature and the impact that decline is having on climate change. Durham Wildlife Trust has set out an ambitious strategy to reverse this decline and ensure that nature is protected for future generations. As a parent myself, knowing that we have plans to protect and conserve nature is something that I am passionate about. We must be the sector leader and be the change agent needed to ensure that nature is available and accessible by everyone well into the future."

Sarah Lister, Chair of Trustees, Durham Wildlife Trust

#### **This Document**

We are at the eleventh hour.

We are the generation faced with a stark choice. Will we allow nature to continue to decline or will we take action?

This document sets out Durham Wildlife Trust's 2030 Strategy and how it will inspire and encourage our staff, supporters and partners to take the action needed to bring nature back between the Tees and the Tyne.

Our strategy aligns with international, UK and Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts (RSWT) goals to deliver 30% of land and sea protected for nature by 2030 (30 by 30). This global ambition will only be realised through effective local action by communities across the world. Durham Wildlife Trust's 2030 Strategy sets out our route map for how working in partnership with the people who live and work between the Tees and the Tyne will deliver 30 by 30.

This is a living document that will be reviewed and updated throughout its life. Individual actions and strategies will change in the light of better ideas, insights and in response to funding opportunities and operational constraints.

Durham Wildlife Trust's 2030 Strategy has been created through the passion, commitment, expertise and energy of our Trustees, employees and volunteers. For it to be effective it needs the support of everyone across our region – the people, communities, businesses and institutions that rely on our region's natural environment for their own health and prosperity. Durham Wildlife Trust is up for the challenge to bring nature back over the next 7 years. Are you?



#### **Executive summary**

The key aspects of the Strategy are set out below.

## They reflect the 3 key goals of the Strategy:

- 1. Nature in Recovery (30 % of land and sea by 2030)
- 40,000ha of additional land improved for nature and the restoration of natural processes.
- 1000ha of this to be additional land managed by Durham Wildlife Trust.
- Robust local metrics and data gathering to monitor progress.
- Exemplary land management of our own estate.
- 2. Meaningful Action (1 in 4 people involved)
- Adopting the 'Team Wilder' approach and a sub-region operational model based on local communities.
- Embracing supporters of all kinds and diversifying our audiences.
- Providing improved visitor destinations.
- Growing our public profile, operational partnerships and influence to bring about real change.
- 3. Nature-based Solutions (nature central to solving local and global problems)
- Durham Wildlife Trust is the local leader in Biodiversity Net Gain and other natural capital solutions.
- There will be an evidenced-based well-being focus across our activities.
- We will have a strategic approach to projects with nature-based benefits to highlight natural flood management, carbon sequestration, eco-tourism, water quality benefits (e.g. as realised by the Great North Fen).

# To deliver our Goals the Trust has identified 3 Strategic Transformations:

- 1. Community Organising.
- 2. Embracing Digital.
- 3. Step Change in Funding.

# Linked to these are 3 Enabling Priorities for the Trust:

- 1. Getting our own house in order.
- 2. Improving data and evidence base.
- 3. Investing in our people.

# The Strategy leads to several implications for the Trust and its operations:

- Finance transforming to an organisation that consistently generates annual income of more than £6 million.
- Governance delivering greater connection with local communities and increased trustee participation.
- Branding ensuring branding matches local delivery needs.
- Reputation ensuring new ways of generating income do not compromise our values and culture.
- Staff recruitment and retention growing staff numbers to facilitate the delivery of the Strategy.
- Supporters and partnerships new thinking to be embedded across the organisation.
- Skills and knowledge improving our skill and knowledge base to allow us to deliver our ambitions.



## Introduction

# What is 30 by 30?

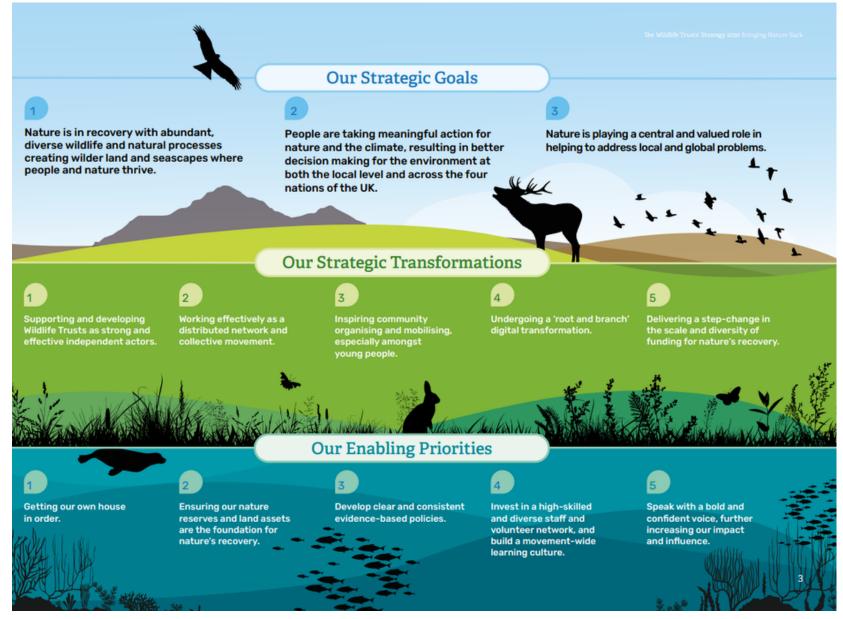
30 by 30 [1] is a goal that the UK and over 100 countries have adopted to protect 30% of the planet for nature by 2030

# Bringing Nature Back – The Wildlife Trusts' Strategy 2030

In 2022, The Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts published their 2030 strategy (Strategy 2030 | The Wildlife Trusts) laying out how the federation of 46 Trusts could play a leading role both nationally and at the local level in delivering 30 by 30. The Strategy sets outs 3 Strategic Goals, 5 Strategic Transformations and 5 Enabling Priorities to help deliver 30 by 30.

#### Context

As shown in the diagram (right), RSWT has three overriding Strategic Goals. In this section we outline what this means for Durham Wildlife Trust.



#### Nature in Recovery -

At least 30% of land & seas actively managed for nature's recovery

Durham Wildlife Trust serves the the majority of the area between the Tees and the Tyne (the southern and northern boundaries of the historic County Durham). That area covers approximately 270,000 hectares (ha) and to deliver the 30 by 30 target, a minimum of 90,000ha will need to be 'connected and protected' for nature. In 2022 it was estimated that approximately 50,000ha already falls within this category including approximately 1000ha under DWT's ownership or direct management.

Our target for 30 by 30 therefore requires a minimum of 40,000ha within our region to be brought into land and seascape management arrangements to improve habitats and aid nature's recovery.

As part of our Strategy the Trust is committing to double the land we have in our direct ownership or management from 1000ha to a minimum of 2000ha by 2030. To achieve the required target of 40,000ha we will seek to influence, advise and campaign to encourage other stakeholders (agencies, local authorities, landowners, businesses and NGOs) to also work and contribute towards the delivery of the necessary improvements.

To achieve this Durham Wildlife Trust, in addition to its traditional role of Conservationist, now needs to expand its skill set and operational focus to include that of a Change Agent: becoming a catalyst to influence and persuade others. An early internal focus will be to understand and develop the skills, knowledge, training and strategies which will be required to help transform ourselves and our supporters. This will enable the Trust to work with or lead other organisations and individuals in the delivery of 30 by 30. A key aspect of this will be to create a network of Team Wilder [2] communities in each of our main population areas working alongside local authorities, community groups and other organisations.

"Nature is in recovery, with abundant, diverse wildlife and natural processes creating wilder land and seascapes where people and nature thrive"

(Bringing Nature Back – The Wildlife Trust's Strategy 2030)



### People are taking meaningful action for nature and the climate -

1 in 4 people will be taking action for nature and the climate

County Durham, Darlington, Gateshead, South Tyneside and Sunderland, the Durham Wildlife Trust operational area, are home to approximately 1,260,000 people. That means 315,000 people will need to be taking action for nature to be able to say that this target has been met in our area by 2030. An early piece of work in the strategy roll out will be to define more clearly how this will be measured and monitored.

# Nature is playing a central and valued role in helping to address local and global problems Health and Wellbeing:

Since 2010 Natural England and the Office of National Statistics have been developing ways of measuring and monitoring how the UK population uses nature, both green and blue spaces, for recreation and other activities. Pre-Covid at least 65% of the population were visiting the natural environment at least once per week- although a significant percentage, 16%, claimed that they engaged with the natural environment less than once per month or never. Our strategy supports the RSWT's target to see an increase of:

"At least 30% more people participating regularly in outdoor activity in high quality accessible natural green and blue spaces near where they live."

(Bringing Nature Back – The Wildlife Trust's Strategy 2030)

Nature is central in stabilising climate:

"Net UK greenhouse gas emissions from land use will have halved and offshore developments will be causing no further harm to carbon capturing marine habitats."

(Bringing Nature Back – The Wildlife Trust's Strategy 2030)

To meet this target, we will need to understand the carbon impacts of land use and offshore developments within our region and to engage with and influence key landowners [3], businesses and major stakeholders to support them in reducing CO2e [4] emissions.

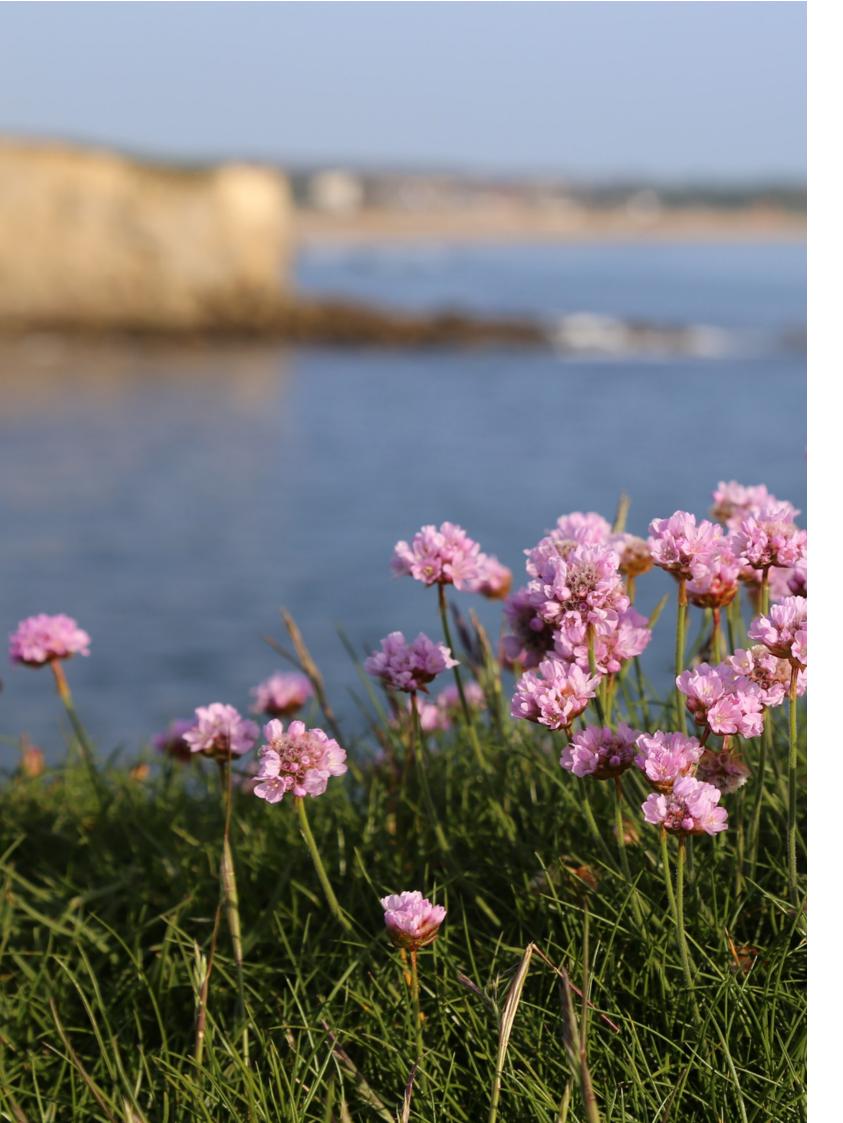
To deliver this we will target and aim to partner or work with Local Authorities, Universities, NHS Trusts, Government Agencies and at least 30 of the largest private sector organisations to influence and provide advice, consultancy services and practical delivery help where appropriate.







[3] These will include institutions and agencies including, but not limited to: MoD; schools; colleges; church dioceses and faith groups; large private estates; NHS trusts; Network Rail; National Highways and local authorities



## Nature is central to water management

"At least 30% of UK flood defence expenditure will be on natural flood solutions" (Bringing Nature Back – The Wildlife Trust's Strategy 2030)

To ensure that this is the case we will continue to work closely with public and private sector partners and agencies to help develop and deliver major landscape solutions such as the Great North Fen. These projects can create habitats that provide flood mitigation, enhanced water quality and help manage our water resource.

Nature helps to improve food security:

"Pollinating insects will have increased by at least 10%, soils will be recovering and all fish stocks will be growing"

(Bringing Nature Back – The Wildlife Trust's Strategy 2030)

We will work with partners and agencies to regularly survey and monitor species populations, publish and promote findings and seek out, promote and, where possible, replicate successful exemplar projects and practices.



## Headline principles, assumptions and insights

In working through the issues that inform this Strategy, several key insights, assumptions and principles emerged. The most significant of those are -

#### We will consolidate and improve what we already manage

Although this strategy anticipates new roles, structures and funding opportunities it is important to state that it does not come at the expense of the Trust's existing sites and other commitments. A key task of delivering any major change programme is the need to maintain, protect and improve core assets. A key deliverable of the strategy will be to demonstrate the ongoing financial, ecological and social benefits of the Trust's existing work.

#### We need to change

Given the urgency and size of the task, it is clear to Trustees and staff that the organisation needs to transform itself to enable it to deliver the agreed targets for environmental improvements and public engagement.

DWT must become a 'Change Agent' to influence other organisations to improve their land management practices and to inspire people of all ages and backgrounds to support nature's recovery. This has major implications for how the Trust defines its role and the structures it needs to develop to deliver its ambitions. At a fundamental level the Trust must broaden its approach. In addition to undertaking practical conservation, the Trust must become an advocate and evangelist for nature. This will require new skills and approaches in partnership working, campaigning and communications.

# We will only change when we have agreed costed and funded plans in place

A key principle underpinning the whole strategy is that no element will be introduced until it is fully costed and funded, or an appropriate de-risked investment decision has been approved.

## We need to increase our income to fund growth and change

The strategy anticipates increased funding opportunities from a variety of sources including:

- Increasing natural capital to deliver Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), Nutrient Neutrality (NN) and Carbon Sequestration.
- New initiatives to grow and diversify the number of income streams we generate from the support of people across our region.
- Increased corporate memberships and strategic partnerships; we aim to have 30 large companies as strategic partners by 2030.
- Increased income from legacies.
- Increased income from consultancy services.
- Better strategic planning for large, restricted funding projects so they maximise the benefits they generate, whether environmental, social or economic.
- Additional retail income linked to new and/or improved Trust visitor centre sites.

Some of these new opportunities are linked to provisions in the Environment Act (2022) and the Trust is already benefitting from additional funding to acquire land which will enable it to generate income from natural capital.







#### Local focus

The Trust also recognises that to encourage 1:4 people to be involved with nature, and to increase their engagement from current levels, it will be important to structure its work around the needs of people, and where they are, rather than to focus only on where our sites have historically been located. The assumption has been made that to reach more people in a locality we will need to use local channels. To this end this strategy seeks to refocus our work around local authority geographies and consider how partnerships with large organisations such as NHS Trusts, universities, large landowners and larger companies might influence the geographic spread of our delivery. This will also entail exploring the best form of branding for this new approach. There will be a need to create local points to appeal to local people (perhaps create new sub-groups e.g. Sunderland Wildlife Trust or Team Wilder Sunderland – both part of the DWT brand).

#### Partnerships

Many of DWT's larger projects to date have been the result of effective partnership working. We will need to continue to develop these partnerships and our skills in creating and managing them if we are to deliver our objectives. We will need to work closely with local authorities, government agencies, business, major institutions such as the NHS and all aspects of the education sector. Our locally based Team Wilder approach will need to identify and recruit key representatives from these organisations to create the most effective teams with excellent links to local networks.

#### Marketing and Digital Focus

To realise our ambitions, the Trust recognises the need for a 'step change' in raising its profile and ability to engage and influence with organisations and individuals. To deliver the impact required it is recognised that the Trust will need to improve its understanding and skills in marketing and digital solutions. An early activity will be the appointment of suitably qualified consultants to help the Trust to create appropriate strategies to address our objectives over the next few years.

#### A More Commercial Approach

The Environment Act has provided major funding opportunities for the Trust and other landowners to profit from a more commercial approach to environmental land management. Some of the Trust's recent land acquisitions will not only improve habitats, they will also have the potential to generate income from BNG, NN and carbon sequestration. These sites need to be managed in a different way. The Trust recognises that not all its land will be managed using the traditional nature reserve model, but all land will provide valuable environmental benefits for our region.

The Trust will be seeking to attract and engage with a range of Strategic Partners. In the past, our approach to large organisations has been to seek donations or support. Strategy 2030 assumes that in future these will be two-way relationships, in which both the Trust and the partner have a variety of needs and strategic objectives which can be mutually addressed. The ability to develop the more commercial aspects of land acquisition and management will be among the new skill sets that the Trust needs to develop over the next few years, whether through appointments, training or outsourcing.

#### Structures to meet our objectives

A key insight has been the recognition that DWT needs to examine all its current structures - governance and staffing through to visitor centres, retail outlets, and operational centres. There is also a recognition that there is work to be done around the Trust's thinking about membership, volunteering, donors, partners and supporters. To this end two Board committees, one responsible for Conservation and one for Development, have been established. Their remit is to commission and scrutinise delivery against the different aspects of this strategy and to then report back to the Board.

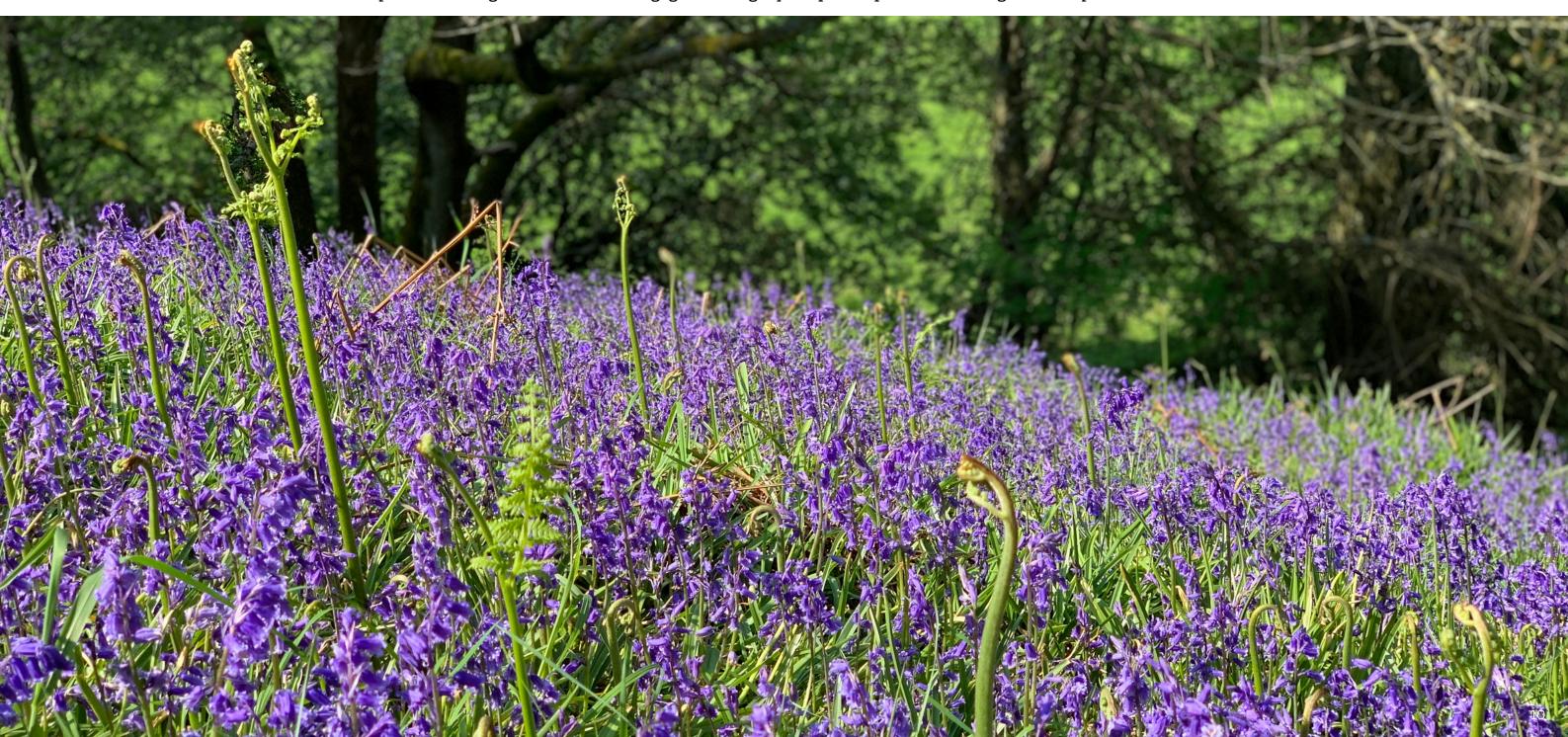
One aspect of the working structure which has been highlighted for review is to consider a 7-Day operational model. By working this way, the Trust would be able to offer additional volunteering opportunities and attract people who are unable to attend during 'normal' office hours. Such 7-Day hybrid working also often appeals to potential employees with mid-week childcare issues, or to students and others looking for part-time weekend working.



#### Conservation

The Conservation Committee will oversee the Trust's nature recovery ambitions. Key elements of this are outlined below -

- We want to be sector leaders. To do this the Trust must deliver its own conservation land management work to the highest of standards.
- Exemplar sites will be delivered that promote the Trust's work and aspirations and realise real world returns for nature, people and the economy that will influence other organisations, partners and supporters to deliver nature's recovery.
- Credible evidence supports credible messaging and delivery. An evidence-based approach will be at the heart of all that Durham Wildlife Trust does. Through investing in our own skills and working closely with universities and other specialist organisations we will provide the local answers to the global problems of biodiversity loss, climate change, degraded river catchments and soils, and social and health-care issues relating to nature. Regular reporting and publications are essential to convey the local state of nature and the benefits nature restoration is providing.
- We will offer services that actively improve the health of our natural environment and increase the knowledge and abilities available to deliver for nature. This will include not just providing ecological surveys and reporting associated with land use change and management, but also expert services in biodiversity net-gain planning and monitoring and other natural capital creation schemes.
- We will be a key partner with all major agencies, authorities and organisations to deliver (and help them to deliver) for nature's recovery on land and at sea.
- Doubling our landholding, raising additional funding and influencing our region will require the Trust to increase our capacity to deliver. Investment from funding will focus on the staff structures and skills needed to deliver expert site management, volunteer engagement, high quality survey and monitoring and in-depth landowner advice.



# Development

To ensure that we can meet our 1:4 target, we must aim to reach all communities within our area – this will help to deliver spaces for nature for people to access and help with engaging new supporters.

We are not just managing nature reserves – we manage 'destinations' and therefore need to provide the expected facilities and customer experiences to engage and attract supporters. Throughout the period of this Strategy, we will review our existing centres and bases and seek to deliver appropriate facilities, whether offices, operational bases or visitor centres, across the whole of our patch.

We will continue to review and develop our existing model of operations and seek to grow and develop our 'supporter' model of donors/members/volunteers/visitors - without losing or alienating existing loyal members and volunteers. We will put supporters at the heart of our activities and ensure exceptional standards of customer service at each point on the supporter journey.

It is likely that the Trust will need to move to a 7-day operational week to enable greater engagement with supporters. This will be done in full consultation with existing staff and volunteers.

We will have a greater community presence, adopting the Team Wilder model and exploring the development of new local operational bases.

#### Staffing

With the increased environmental demands made on larger institutions and businesses (BNG, working towards net-zero etc.) creating increased demand for people with the skills the Trust also needs, an assumption has been made that the next few years will see further challenges for the Trust in terms of staff recruitment and retention. Part of the solution will be the need to increase compensation packages in line with market forces. Alongside this the Trust will seek to create different training and development pathways to create the pool of talent our region needs - paid internships, secondments etc. linked to leading regional academic institutions and businesses. These opportunities will also be offered to staff as part of their career development.

The Trust will also continue to develop into the employer of choice within our sector. One of the outcomes sought by this strategy is for the Trust to seek and receive appropriate accreditation and awards to recognise this aspiration.

It is recognised that training budgets will need to increase to equip staff and volunteers with the skills required to ensure delivery of this strategy. The aspiration is by 2030 to be able to set an annual organisational training budget equivalent to 1% of salary costs.

As funding allows, it is anticipated that a range of new posts will be created across the charity to facilitate delivery of the strategy. The pages summarising the strategy's progress year by year include indicative roles.



#### **Culture and Values**

Durham Wildlife Trust is a values-driven organisation. Trustees, staff, volunteers and supporters share a love and passion for nature. They are also motivated to make a difference. We will continue to review our values and our code of conduct to ensure that we always operate from the highest principles.

Central to the Durham Wildlife Trust staff journey is the ethos of personal and professional development, both within role and the wider nature conservation community.

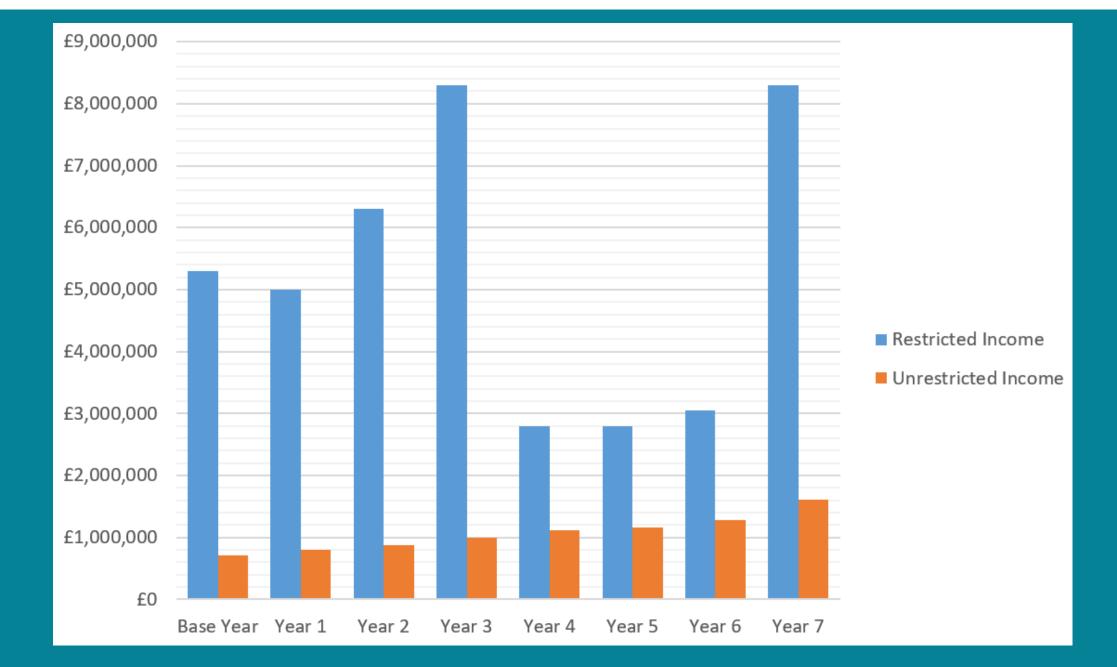
DWT seeks to be an inspiring and energetic place to work. We are creating a work environment that's inclusive as well as diverse – where all our people can be themselves. Each idea, insight and perspective is valued so that we can create a genuine and considered response to the challenges facing our natural environment. This strategy is our collective response to those challenges over the coming critical years.

#### Strategic Approach to Unrestricted Projects

Discover Brightwater, the Trust's largest project to date comes to an end in 2024. The project has taught the Trust the benefit of having clear strategic objectives to aim for. The Great North Fen is such an objective. It was built into the Brightwater programme as a legacy project. The Trust has now received more than £3 million to purchase the initial tranches of land which will form the heart of the Great North Fen. This document assumes that this strategic long-term approach to developing and funding projects – by ensuring the creation of a strong pipeline of costed objectives which can be funded through loans, grants and commercial activities - will continue. The Trust will create a constant pipeline of projects that will reach £6million turnover over 2 years by 2030. Projects funded from restricted funds must be budgeted in such a way that they adequately support the charity's core costs through management fees. Before any project will be progressed it must clearly demonstrate that core costs can be met.

# Strategy Budget Forecast

The following forecast assumes both the existence of such a pipeline of projects and that fees generated will be based on a cautious and realistic extrapolation of recent trends.



View the Trust's eight year plan on page 13.

Activity/Theme	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026	2026-2027	2027-2028	2028-2029	2029-2030	2030
Governance	Ownership of strategy and active participation by Trustees	All Trustees playing active roll in committees. Local 'boards' and/or DWS	All Trustees playing active roll in committees. Local 'boards' and/or DWS	All Trustees playing active roll in committees. Local 'boards' and/or DWS	All Trustees playing active roll in committees. Local 'boards' and/or DWS	All Trustees playing active roll in committees. Local 'boards' and/or DWS	All Trustees playing active roll in committees. Local 'boards' and/or DWS	All Trustees playing active roll in committees. Local 'boards' and/or DWS
	Improved financial modelling (inc. restricted/unrestricted pipelines)	Improved financial modelling (inc. restricted/unrestricted pipelines)	Improved financial modelling (inc. restricted/unrestricted pipelines)	Improved financial modelling (inc. restricted/unrestricted pipelines)	Improved financial modelling (inc. restricted/unrestricted pipelines)	Improved financial modelling (inc. restricted/unrestricted pipelines)	Improved financial modelling (inc. restricted/unrestricted pipelines)	Improved financial modelling (inc. restricted/unrestricted pipelines)
	Review structures – local governance 'boards'		Local model embedded, any legal changes made	Review structures – local governance – are the new structures working?	Mid-term Strategy review		Local operation incorporated into governance – stronger link with communities	Local operation incorporated into governance – stronger link with communities
	DWS review consultancy and accreditation opportunities		Diversity targets and implementation plan in place		First local State of Nature report	Review operational and staffing models	Updated local State of Nature	DWT 2,000ha of land
Nature in Recovery	Nutrient Neutrality (NN) land acquisition continues	NN Land Acquisition continues	1500ha of DWT land (+500)	Actively seeking further land acquisitions	DWT 1600 ha, directly influence further 6000ha	Actively seeking further land acquisitions	Develop and promote 2050, 2100 and 2500 strategies – 'help us build tomorrow's ancient habitats / landscapes'	Directly influence a further 10,000ha – 30,000ha by partners
	Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) process	Deliver LNRS implementation	LNRS implementation and landowner engagement 2000ha per annum (10,000)			Large wildling project delivery phase		30% of land for nature
Meaningful Action	Appoint Marketing consultants	Monitor marketing and engagement - DC						Supporters
	Review of supporter / volunteer / donor/ member model	Organisational Needs Analysis – enhancing existing centres and new geographical centres						1 in 4 engaged
	Develop Engagement strategy (cradle to grave) roll out ongoing	Localism – 'white papers' and conferences	Large scale wilding proposals – Nationally significant conference		Local conferences in lead up to 2030 Planning for major campaign/event in 2030	Major campaign/event launch for 2030	Major campaign/event delivered	Team Wilder operating from local operating centres
	Develop Strategic Partnership / Commercial membership offer	First tranche of Strategic Partners (Target 5 sign-ups)	Partnership development ongoing – 5 partnerships per annum (30)	Partnership development ongoing – 5 partnerships per annum (30)	Partnership development ongoing – 5 partnerships per annum (30)	Partnership development ongoing – 5 partnerships per annum (30)	Partnership development ongoing – 5 partnerships per annum (30)	30 Strategic Partnerships
			Planning for remodelled/new Visitor centre(s) and operational delivery centre(s)	Deliver new local operational bases Deliver new/remodelled Visitor Centres			New HQ	New HQ
Nature Based Solutions	Discover Brightwater Completion and Great North Fen development plan	Great North Fen Delivery	Great North Fen delivery informing new wilding initiatives		Great North Fen case study – multiple benefits evaluation			Great North Fen and 2nd large wilding project in delivery
	Linked Together Development phase complete and delivery bid submitted	Linked Together Delivery	Linked Together delivery informing new health and well being initiatives		Link Together evaluation and health and well-being case study – target mainstream NHS funding	Mainstream NHS funding supports our work		Link Together health and well being evidence base
		National Highways Projects (A19, A194)		Large area wilding proposal launched – development phase			Embedded in delivery by partners	NBS embedded in delivery by partners
Strategic Transformations	Create Digital Transformation Plan	Roll out Digital Plan						Digital across all activities
	Develop project pipeline (aim £5 million over 2 year timeframe)	Develop project pipeline (aim £5 million over 2 year timeframe)	Develop project pipeline (aim £5 million over 2 year timeframe)	Develop project pipeline (aim £5 million over 2 year timeframe)	Project pipeline (aim £6 million over 2 year timeframe)	Project pipeline (aim £6 million over 2 year timeframe)	Project pipeline (aim £6 million over 2 year timeframe)	New funding (credits, NHS) and maximise existing sources
	Maximise new land revenue streams – BNG sales				New HQ feasibility		New HQ delivery	Team Wilder, new centres and HQ
	Explore 7-Day working	Launch new consultancy and accreditation offer (DWS/DWT?)	Review 7-Day operational week					Major appeal to fund 'Tomorrow's ancient habitats' linked to 2050,2100,2100 Strategies launched
				Monitor review consultancy/accreditation products				
Enabling Priorities	Develop species / habitat recovery metrics and monitoring - CC	Formal link with universities offering career pathway	State of Nature Report and nature recovery pathway – annual reports thereafter					
	Develop engagement metrics and monitoring – DC	Roll out enhanced accessibility across all sites (physical and digital) – ongoing implementation	Review employer accreditation – Investors in People, Best Companies etc and finances permitting seek accreditation.	Implement employer accreditation	Employer accreditation scheme higher level	Employer accreditation scheme higher level	Employer accreditation scheme higher level	Top rated employer
		Compile nature recovery metrics and publish baseline – CC						Data collection and management systems in place
Unrestricted posts - core	Appoint Head of Development as per existing budget proposal		Development officer appointed, income permitting		Appoint conservation officer, income permitting			7 day operation
	Appoint conservation officer if BNG income realised				Appoint development officer, income permitting			13