Warwickshire Wildlife Trust Annual Report 2016



A summary for members



We would like to offer our warm thanks and sincere gratitude to everyone who contributed to our success in 2016 and, most of all, for helping make our region a better place to live and work.

We can be justifiably proud of what we are achieving. Keep up the superb work and thank you for being part of it!

Thank You!

A full version of our 2016 Annual Report is available on our website; www.warwickshirewildlifetrust.org.uk/publications

Nature Reserves

- » More than 21,000 reed plugs planted at Brandon Marsh
- » Agreement reached to manage four Local Nature Reserves in North Warwickshire for the next 15 years
- » Funding secured to review the management plans for the Trust's woodlands

The Newlands Reedbed at Brandon Marsh was expanded with over 21,000 reed plugs generously and meticulously planted by the Brandon Marsh Voluntary Conservation Team to improve and increase the valuable wetland habitat.

Four nature reserves were added to our portfolio through an agreement with North Warwickshire Borough Council. Engaging local people and working in partnership has increased our presence and prominence in this area of the county.

The Trust embarked on a review of its woodland portfolio, to take forward our greatest assets for wildlife and ensure they are resilient and well managed in to the future. The work in 2016 initiated a revision of the various management plans and the development of a sustainable woodland strategy.

Elsewhere, the Bubbenhall Wood and Meadow Heritage Lottery Funded project entered its first year and access and

infrastructure improvements were a priority alongside recruiting new volunteers. The Coronation meadows project had further success: 20 green winged orchids have established themselves at Dunchurch meadow, the receptor site for green hay and plug plants in 2015.

2016 saw a review of our Reserves Practical Work Party Leaders handbook, whereby the Trust, in parallel with the

review of the organizational health and safety policy, ensured our volunteers were supported in the responsibility of leading groups – making sure everyone stays competent and up to date with processes and procedures.

Newlands Reedbed at Brandon Marsh © 2017 Steven Cheshire (WWT).

Wetlands

- » Delivered Guphill Brook Wetland Enhancement Project in Coventry
- » Commenced delivery of Water Vole Recovery Project in North Warwickshire
- » Progressed improvements to wetlands at Hampton Wood & Meadow

The Guphill Brook riverine enhancement project was delivered in partnership with Middlemarch Environmental Ltd, Environment Agency, Coventry City Council and Wild Trout Trust using £24,500 of funding secured from the Warwickshire Avon Catchment Partnership through DEFRA.

The works increased flow diversity along the Guphill Brook (a tributary of the River Sherbourne) with the addition of two slack water pools. New lowland meadow and wet meadow were created with help from over 24 local community members on several volunteer days totalling 65 hours work. We also delivered a training day which provided two beneficial woody debris structures along the section of brook to increase bed scour and form oxygenated gravel ramps and Installed 15m of woody debris bank cover for fish fry and instream invertebrates.

The Water Vole Recovery Project delivered water vole survey training, hedge laying training courses and habitat enhancement works across 12 volunteer days. Volunteers donated 261 hours, restored over 50m of hedgerow through traditional hedge laying and surveyed 14 sites. Data were uploaded onto a Geographical Information System to monitor water vole population in North Warwickshire and to help focus areas for habitat improvements. Match funding was secured including £12,000 from Tesco Bags of Help.

Thanks to funding from Elizabeth Creak Charitable Trust good progress was made on Hampton Wood Meadow Wetland enhancement works. Site visits were undertaken with Environment Agency and site wardens in September to obtain levels and work up a design. Excavation works are scheduled for end of summer 2017.

Planning

- Mammal passage incorporated into bridge design at Jaguar Land Rover Whitley following an objection by the Trust to the scheme
- » Another objection helped save Loxley Meadow Local Wildlife Site as planning permission was refused (in part) due to the impacts on ecology
- » At the Stratford District Council Local Plan examination hearing we requested that the protection of Racecourse Meadow SSSI was explicitly written within the policy for the South West Relief Road proposed only 10m away from it

In 2016 the Planning Team, supported by 80 days of volunteer time, identified 148 planning applications that were then screened for any likely impact on wildlife. We responded to 52 of these via the planning consultation process and objected to six of these due to the proposed loss of Local Wildlife Site. Of the six one application was refused because of the LWS and 3 approved, despite our objections.

Only 30% of applications required us to request a Biodiversity Impact Assessment (compared to 45% last year) and therefore that of Biodiversity Offsetting. We ran in-house training on Biodiversity

> Offsetting for the planning officers at two Local Planning Authorities and received 45 planning related public enquiries of which 96% were responded to within the target timeframe.

In February the Trust appeared for the second time in front of the HS2 Select Committee asking for increased compensation for lost ancient woodland and reiterating our ask for net gains for biodiversity.

demonstrating a continued increase in its use, Gina Rowe, Living Landscapes Manager at the HS2 Select Committee @ 2017 WWT.

Habitat Biodiversity Audit

- The HBA project celebrated 20 years of continuous surveying
- The European OpenNESS report on the Warwickshire Ecosystem Services case study by Oxford University's Environmental Change Institute was published using the HBA Phase 1 habitat data
- Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council (NBBC) Ecology and Geodiversity report completed by the HBA and published by NBBC as part of the green infrastructure plan for the borough

A conference showcasing the work of the HBA was held at Ryton Garden Organics on the 29th June: 70 people attended the event which was open to all the HBA partners, associated wildlife groups and individuals.

The HBA Manager, Chris Talbot, presented at the European Ecosystem Conference in Antwerp 19-23rd September. The title of the presentation was "Ecosystem services in the context of biodiversity offsetting; practioner experiences from Warwickshire, UK"

In November 2016 55% of the Warwickshire sub-region data is currently up to date (i.e. within the 5 year target), 16% is between 2005 and 2010, with the remaining 29% pre 2005. A volunteer habitat survey training session was held on 15th April at Brandon Marsh with 10 participants.

The Local Wildlife Sites 2016 survey season surveyed 54 core sites in addition to the Duke Bridge Meadow, Coleshill commissioned by the Tame Valley project. Notable sites surveyed during the year included the Blythe Valley Park in Solihull; a resurvey of Whittleford Park for Nuneaton and Bedworth BC: excellent speciesrich grasslands at Packwood House National Trust property and the extensive acid woodland at Coughton Park, for the Heart of England Forest Trust.

Tame Valley Wetlands Landscape Partnership (TVWLP)

- 2 large-scale wetland and river restoration projects completed
- A new 6 hectare community wetland was created at Kingsbury Water Park
- 4,422 people engaged face-to-face through engagement activities

The HLF-funded TVWLP Scheme continued a full programme of work throughout 2016 to improve the 104km² landscape between Birmingham and Tamworth for people and wildlife.

In the wetland created at Kingsbury Water new reedbeds, scrapes and pools were created, along with a sand martin bank, a new visitor viewing platform and interpretation and seating. A 140m new channel and island in the River Tame was also established at Tameside Local Nature Reserve in Tamworth. Both projects will help to restore the river and its floodplain, enhancing biodiversity and people's connection to nature. Thanks to Biffa Award, Environment Agency, Heritage Lottery Fund, The Howard Victor Skan Charitable Trust, Tamworth Borough Council, Staffordshire Wildlife Trust and Warwickshire County Council for their support.

Youth group controlling invasive Himalayan Balsam © 2017 WWT.

Led by Scheme staff employed by Warwickshire Wildlife Trust.

> 1,358 young people and school children were engaged through 65 sessions; 32 events were also delivered with 2,457 attendees; and 58 training sessions were held with 607 attendees. The scheme also had one full-time apprentice and six trainees.

Staffordshire Wildlife Trust and RSPB.

Through the TameForce volunteer group, corporate days and other volunteering, 7,784 hours were generously volunteered towards the delivery of the Scheme, with an estimated value in match funding of £75,600.

A new website (www.tamevalleywetlands.co.uk) has also been launched allowing people to start discovering the Tame Valley Wetlands for themselves. The website had 25,198 page views over the whole year, with 138,893 engagements through social media.

Princethorpe Woodlands Living Landscape

- The development phase was completed in August 2016
- Delivery Phase plans and activities were detailed in the submission documents
- The £1.1 million bid was approved by the Heritage Lottery Fund in December 2016

As part of the development phase, we engaged with 20 landowners and 16 partners to develop projects including surveys and management of woodland,

meadow, pond and hedgerows, and a variety of access and

interpretation schemes.

Extensive community consultation was carried out by project staff and consultants with over 300 questionnaires completed, eight public consultation events and meetings held with all partners and key contacts.

Trials of engagement activities were undertaken, including education sessions, youth activities and wildplay events. A detailed assessment of partner skills and requirements was completed, and recommendations for training in the HLF delivery phase were written.

A successful heritage event at Brinklow Castle was held in October to engage people in the project. Trials of engagement activities were undertaken, including education sessions, youth activities and wildplay events, which were all evaluated.

A detailed assessment of partner skills and requirements was done, and recommendations for training in the HLF delivery phase were written.

LNP and LBAP Partnership

- First Nature Improvement Area (NIA) designated by Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull Local Nature Partnership (LNP)
- Tame Valley Wetlands Catchment Plan produced and priority projects identified for Warwickshire Avon Catchment Partnership
- Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) Progress Report 2016 produced based on input from 80 partners

The Local Nature Partnership Board approved the Tame Valley Wetlands as the first Nature Improvement Area (NIA) for Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull in October, following development of the NIA designation criteria by the LNP Implementation Group. Solihull MBC approved a proposal to include the River Cole, Kingfisher Country Park and north Solihull wards in the NIA. This extension which will be assessed by the LNP Board in 2017.

The Local Biodiversity Action Partnership expanded to over 80 organisations and groups reporting on progress towards revised targets. Ruth Moffatt, our key volunteer, co-ordinated the reports, covering five habitats and six species plans in 2016 and helping to assess state of nature across Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull. Highlights include over 67 km of

hedgerow restored, four times the target, improvement of habitat at eight guarries and good progress via agri-environment schemes for wildlife rich field margins and farmland birds, opposite to the national trend.

The Trust has been active in two Catchment Partnerships supported by Environment Agency, engaging new partners and landowners in projects. In the Tame Anker Mease, the Trust, working with Severn Trent as lead host, developed priorities for funding and revision of the Catchment

Plan. In the Warwickshire Avon the Catchment Plan was produced by the Trust, consulting with partners to describe the catchment and state key priority areas. A Project Implementation Plan was produced, with projects categorised by stage of development.

Phase 1 habitat plan © 2017 HBA.

Health and Well Being

- Secured £372,304 from the Big Lottery for a 3 year project to improve the mental health of people in Coventry through activities in the natural environment
- Delivered over 200 funded sessions specifically aimed at improving peoples mental and physical health through activities in the natural environment
- Over 1,250 volunteer hours spent improving sites for people and wildlife

This area of the Trust's work has grown a great deal in 2016 and has led to new and exciting partnerships, most notably with Coventry and Warwickshire Mind which helped to secure Big Lottery Funding for The Environment and Me (TEaM) Project, which is set to start delivering in 2017 and will work with 300 people over three years.

In Coventry, the Go with the Flow Project, funded by Coventry City Councils Public Health team, worked with over 60 people engaging them with the outdoors to offer both physical and mental wellbeing benefits. The participants worked on a wide range of sites from woodlands to allotments, and the learning from this

project supported the application to the Big Lottery for the TEaM project.

In Solihull the Your Wild Life Project, funded by the Metropolitan Borough Council, worked with over 30 new volunteers. One individual who takes part in the project said 'this has changed my life, I was down and depressed and my drinking was high, but now I am off the drink and my depression has lifted'. In 2016 as well as working with adults the Your Wild Life Project also worked with children, families and young people thanks to additional funding from SMBC allowing us to run over 120 sessions and engage with over 300 children and young people.

Training

- » Nine trainees from the 2015-16 cohort successfully completed their placements and 10 new trainees started across seven partners
- » The Trust continued to act as the Learning Centre for other Trusts running training programmes
- » We helped to steer the Career Routes Into Nature Conservation (CRiNC) research, led by TWT centrally

In total 90% of the first cohort of the Heritage Lottery funded Wilder Career Choice trainees completed their certificates in Work Based Environmental Conservation in March 2016. One trainee has stayed on within the Trust's Education Team, and a further 7 have gone on to get jobs within the sector. Ten new trainees started their Wilder Career Choice traineeships in arch 2016, and have made very good progress across the year.

Their feedback on the scheme after just 6 months was very positive, with all 10 trainees saying they felt their skills were improving and they were getting a chance to experience what a job in the sector is really like.

The Trust has benefited from being involved in the CRiNC steering group, getting to see and hear the key findings of some national research commission by TWT into training provision across all Wildlife Trusts. This research has helped to highlight both the challenges and opportunities of delivering training programmes and will help inform how the Trust takes its vision for training forward after the Wilder Career Choice project ends in 2018.

Volunteers

- » More than 38,300 volunteer hours were donated to help the Trust in 2016
- » Donated time equivalent to an additional 21 full time members of staff
- » Volunteer policy review

Once again, our volunteers stepped up to the cause and generously volunteered a magnificent 38,500 hours to the Trust and these are just the hours that we have managed to record! There is huge amount of unseen effort from our volunteers that often goes unrecorded.

Support at this level benefits both individual teams of staff, the organisation as a whole and the individuals involved who gain a huge amount from volunteering. We want to say a huge thank you for all of the support our volunteers give.

We continue to develop our volunteer roles so we have a range of opportunities on offer, meaning that there is likely to be something for everyone. Our health projects in Rugby, Coventry and Solihull have brought new volunteers to the Trust and have seen significant improvements for wildlife in these areas as well as providing the volunteers with the opportunity to improve their physical or mental health.

Our Volunteer policy was reviewed in 2016 and we continue to see volunteer enquiry numbers increase and many new volunteers joining us to help to maintain some of Warwickshire's wildest places!



Volunteers working at Ryton Wood © 2017 Alex Murrison (WWT).

Education

- A total number of 21,198 children took part in education activities
- 243 wildlife themed parties delivered across Brandon Marsh and the Parkridge Centre
- 124 school groups visited us for curriculum based activities lead by our Education Team and Volunteers

2016 was a record year for education with our highest engagement numbers to date. The education team secured funding again from Children in Need to deliver outreach work in children's centres and also received funding from several charitable Trusts and from both Warwickshire and Solihull Councils. This allowed us to work with two special needs schools weekly and work with several deprived schools in North Solihull.

The education team also delivered a record number of school trips, parties and uniformed groups' sessions.

We also launched our new nature babies' session at The Parkridge Centre and saw almost 700 visits of parents and their young children engaging in wildlife themed play - with edible sand being popular.

Our success in 2016 was finished off by receiving £50,000 from the Peoples Postcode Lottery.

This project will deliver forest school, activities across 2017 and offer sessions to schools in Coventry, and Nuneaton and Bedworth.

Youth Engagement

- » 1,163 hours of volunteer time contributed by the 11 24 age group
- » Completion of Heritage Lottery Fund Welcombe Hills project with successful launch of Trust's first audio trail
- 18 young people completed work experience with the Trust



Lillington Youth Club © 2017 Matt Cox (WWT).

2016 has seen us working in partnership with a wide range of organisations, demonstrating our ability to work successfully at delivering outdoor and nature based activities suited to young people. This has included school holiday work with youth centres, volunteering experiences for University and college students on our reserves, and the delivery of programmes for secondary schools and those seeking work experience placements. The breadth of diversity shows that Warwickshire Wildlife Trust is in a good position to expand its capacity for youth engagement in the county.

We have completed several funded projects including the Welcombe Hill Audio Trail project which is now available online that provides a new way for those visiting the site to experience it. We completed projects with Coventry University and Lillington Youth Club increasing opportunities in these places for young people to get out and experience nature.

This year we supported 18 young people through work experience placements. This has been the most popular year yet for work experience and next year we will be looking at refashioning how we provide work experience to cater for increase interest from young people.

Community Work

- » 21 volunteers recruited to the Green and Healthy Rugby Project
- » A standard and easily updated signage format was developed for all Trust nature reserves
- » Community engagement at Bubbenhall Wood 9 events, engaging with 160 people, living in Bubbenhall and the surrounding villages

A new format for corporate volunteering was established through research and collaboration with other trusts. A robust plan will ensure these Wild Work Days are profitable and meet clear objectives/criteria. The model will go live in spring 2017.

We secured funding from Warwickshire Public Health to deliver the Green and Healthy Rugby project which aimed to get people in Rugby active, outdoors on our reserves at Cock Robin Wood and Swift Valley. We hosted 10 taster sessions over 5 months, increased volunteer numbers and both work parties are now at capacity. Four volunteers also trained as first aiders, increasing the capacity of both groups. Data relating to mental and physical health was collected after the first, four and sixth session to track changes over time. Data collection will continue until February 2017.

Delivery of the HLF funded project at Bubbenhall Wood and Meadow Nature reserve started in July 2016. Nine events were held over the course of the year, engaging with 160 people including members and non-members. In addition, we launched an Oral History project to capture people's memories of the wood and the changes in the landscape over time, to feed into site interpretation. Currently five people have been interviewed, with at least another five planned in 2017.

Funding from the Tesco's Bags of Help scheme helped to improve visitor experience and boost engagement at Ufton Fields, River Arrow, Swift Valley and Brandon Marsh. Improvements included waymarked trails, new interpretation boards, infrastructure and habitat enhancements such as wildflower meadows and hedgelaying. Projects are due for completion in summer 2017.

Hedgehog Improvement Areas

- » Launch of Rugby Hedgehog Improvement Area
- » Hedgehog friendly planning prescriptions added to the Rugby Local Plan.
- » Funding secured from British Hedgehog Preservation Society for next two years

The Solihull Hedgehog Improvement Area continued throughout 2016. Sixteen surveys of local authority greenspace were undertaken, with hedgehogs being found at 4 of the sites. A total of 196 footprint tunnels were monitored for hedgehog activity across the borough, acting as a fantastic vehicle for engagement and increasing our understanding of hedgehog presence and absence. Five key primary schools were engaged with the project, with repeat visits throughout the year facilitating hedgehog surveys led by children. A total of 900 children were engaged with the Solihull HIA throughout 2016.

In April, our second Hedgehog Improvement Area launched in

Rugby. The project aims to increase engagement activity in a more rural and rapidly developing area of the county. In 2016 the Rugby project engaged with over 2,000 people, provided education sessions to 1,300 children and notably worked in close partnership with Rugby Borough Council (RBC) to include hedgehog friendly planning prescriptions in the supporting text of RBC's Local Plan.

This work extended to the Radio Rugby housing development, where targeted engagement of the site's ecologists led to plans being finalised for hedgehog friendly fencing in 183 properties. These plans should come to fruition during phase 2 of the house building in 2017-18.





Hedgehog © 2017 Steven Cheshire (WWT).

Visitor Centres

- 24,090 people visited Brandon Marsh Nature Centre in 2016
- Brandon Marsh shop takings were up 12% on 2015 takings
- Improvements have been made to Brandon and Parkridge Visitor Centres



New geology wall interpratation at Brandon Marsh © 2017 WWT.

Both sites saw an increase in visitors on the previous year which subsequently generated an increased income from the Visitor Centres.

Improvements to Brandon Visitor Centre include the completion of new office and meeting space, and new interpretation boards have been installed by the geological wall. The Barn has been updated to improve the visitor experience for those hiring the Barn. The Badgers tea room was taken under new management in 2016.

At Parkridge we have continued to develop the wildlife garden and a new nest box camera was installed along with a buggy shelter for visiting mums. The classroom has had new flooring which has been greatly welcomed by the thousands of families visiting us each year.

A defibrillator has been installed on the outside of the Parkridge Centre thanks to Solihull Lions, West Midlands Ambulance and Fast Aid.

Membership

- The Trust had 22,632 members and 9,872 subscriptions in December 2016
- Membership income increased by 1%
- Retention rate increased by 2%

Recruitment in 2016 remained challenging particularly managing recruitment through our recruitment company, Wildlife Fundraising Central Ltd (WFC), which the Trust co-owns with six other Wildlife Trusts. As a result of under performance in this area of recruitment, the decision was made to reduce recruitment targets for WFC half way through the year. In an attempt to fill the gap, the Trust increased our own internal face to face recruitment activities on nature reserves, at our visitor centres and at local venues and events.

Corporate membership stood at 27 businesses. As well as providing income through subscriptions many of our corporate members also contributed to conservation activities on reserves through volunteering time as well as providing donations for materials. Businesses have been hugely supportive with donations and raffle prizes. Warwickshire Wildlife Trust is very grateful to the following people who remembered local wildlife and gave a lasting gift to the Trust in their wills this year:

Eva Grace Burdett - £56,629.63 Anthony Stewart Greaves - £1,000 David Cottrill - £200 Pauline Marianne Whitehead - £50,000*

*interim payment

Communications

- » 13% of new members join via the Trust website (an increase of 1.2%)
- » 16% increase in Twitter followers and 31% increase in Facebook followers
- » 13% increase in sessions by website users

In 2016 we sent out 17 press releases gaining media coverage in local newspapers, BBC Coventry and Warwickshire radio plus national coverage in The Telegraph and internationally in the Wall Street Journal.

All our members received three editions of WildWarwickshire magazine with articles on a wide range of topics. Our spring edition included news of the Trust attending the HS2 Select Committee meeting in London, we announced the Trust's new nature reserve at Dunchurch Meadow and the launch of the Tame Valley Wetlands Landscape Partnership Scheme.

We also remembered Alban Wincott who sadly died in 2014. He was instrumental in forming the Brandon Marsh Conservation Group in 1967.

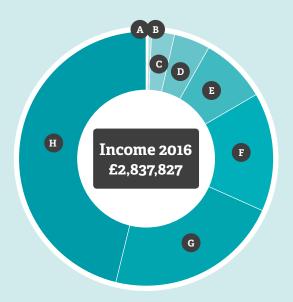
Our summer 2015 magazine was the 150th edition of the Trusts Members Magazine. We invited readers to take a look at back issues (25th, 50th, 75th, 100th and 125th editions) of the Trust magazine via the Layar App and we told the story of Warwickshire's Geology through the new geology wall installed at Brandon Marsh in partnership with the Warwickshire Geological Conservation Group.

E-newsletters go out monthly to over 5,800 recipients and quarterly to our volunteers and local businesses.

We have been broadening the range of social media we use for communications, expanding our Instagram and YouTube channels. Our social media community is growing strongly, with a 16% increase in Twitter followers to 8,812 followers and a 31% increase in Facebook to 3,297 followers, both driving traffic to the website, promoting membership and events, project news and wildlife highlights. We continue to showcase the wide variety of work going on at the Trust through these channels.



Financial review

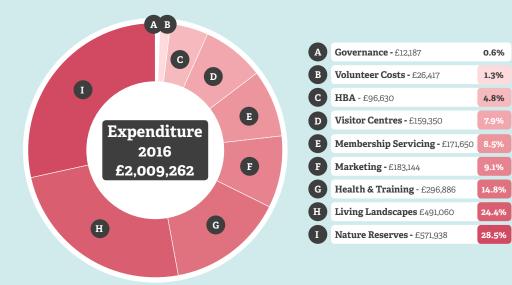


A	Fundraising - £7,956	0.3%
В	Interest - £11,945	0.4%
C	Legacies - £82,110	2.9%
D	Visitor Centres - £130,268	4.6%
E	Middlemarch - £239,333	8.4%
F	Donations - £427,211	15.1%
G	Subscriptions - £628,927	22.2%
H	Grants - £1,310,077	46.2%

Income 2016 Total £2,837,827

The Trust continued to secure funding from a wide range of sources, providing stability should any particular source of funding reduce or cease. In 2016-17 the Trust secured £2.837.827 of income, of which £628,927* came from membership subscriptions.

This type of income is unrestricted.*



Expenditure 2016

Total £2,009,262

A large part of the expenditure, £571,938 (28.5%) was invested in the maintainance of our nature reserves. We also invested £296,886 (14.8% of our expenditure) in health and training. We continue to work hard to ensure we keep our administration and running costs to a minimum.

Restricted Funds - Funds - which have been given to the Trust for a particular purpose. *Unrestricted Funds - these funds can be used wherever we think the need is greatest.

A full version of our 2016 Annual Report is available on our website; www.warwickshirewildlifetrust.org.uk/publications





Warwickshire Wildlife Trust Annual Report Summary

Highlights and Achievements

- 2100 reed plugs planted on Newlands Phase III at Brandon Marsh
- A new 6 hectare community wetland was created at Kingsbury Water
 Park as part of the Tame Valley Wetlands Landscape Partnership
- The £1.1 million bid for the Princethorpe Woodlands Living Landscape project was approved by the Heritage Lottery Fund in December 2016
- Secured £372,304 from the Big Lottery for a 3 year project to improve the mental health of people in Coventry
 - More than 38,300 volunteer hours were donated in 2016
 - 21,198 children took part in education activities
- 124 school groups visited us for curriculum based activities lead by our Education Team and Volunteers
 - 24,090 people visited Brandon Marsh Nature Centre in 2016
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