

Annual Report 2017

A summary for members

Warwickshire Wildlife Trust exists to achieve our vision of an environment rich in wildlife for everyone in Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull. We were established in 1970 to protect our local natural heritage and encourage people to engage, enjoy and get involved with the natural environment.

iving Landscapes

Nature Reserves

- » More than 6,830 trees planted across Bubbenhall meadow restoration Area
- » Agreement reached to manage two Local Nature Reserves in Stratford upon Avon for a further 10 years.
- » Over 23,000 volunteer hours of time committed to managing nature reserves.



Our reinvigorated Survey Force volunteer group committed over 800 hours of surveying and monitoring of our nature reserves to ensure that the management we employ results in a positive outcome for wildlife and informs future management plans.

The Trusts two Stratford upon Avon nature reserves, Welcombe Hills and River Arrow, had their agreements renewed for another 10 years. The establishment of a Welcombe Hills volunteer group started in late 2017 and continues to grow.

The Trust took forward its work on managing its woodlands by developing new management plans

and continued to work with partners, stakeholders and volunteers to bring our 440ha of woodlands into a sustainable long term management. We planted over 6,000 native trees at Bubbenhall Meadow restoration area to continue to restore the woodland connectivity in the Dunsmore Living Landscape area.

Elsewhere, the Reserves Volunteer Work Parties continued their good work and the Trust worked with them to review and update their training in line with a new health and safety policy. Refresher training in chainsaws and other essential areas means they can continue to work safely and effectively to ensure our nature reserves are well managed for wildlife.

Planning...

- » We input into the design of a large wetlands area associated with Phase 4 of the Meon Vale development in Stratford District.
- » The Trust acted as an expert witness at a planning appeal public inquiry for the development proposed at Daw Mill colliery.
- » We worked with planning officers at North Warwickshire Borough Council on their Local Plan to ensure protection for the environment.

The Planning Team, supported by 74 days of volunteer time, identified 161 planning applications that were screened for any impact on wildlife. We responded to 65 of these via the planning consultation process and objected to five planning applications.

28% of planning applications required us to request a Biodiversity Impact Assessment. We ran in-house training on Biodiversity Offsetting for the planning officers at one Local Planning Authority and received 41 planning related public enquiries of which 95% were responded to.

2017 saw continued engagement with HS2 as Phase 1 got underway and plans started to be compiled for Phase 2b. The West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) elected a mayor and the Trust worked to engage the WMCA to best protect the natural environment.

The Avon Navigation Trust resurrected their proposals to make the River Avon Navigable from Stratford to Warwick, and we raised our concerns about the environmental impact this will have to councillors within both Local Authorities.

Living Landscapes

- » 1.5km or river and canal banks enhanced with nearly 100m of coir roll installed, 100m of hedge laid and 2000 plug plants established
- » Created 1km of 'Water Vole Highway' along Coventry and Oxford Canals
- » Over 1000 volunteer hours given to Wetland work

The national lottery funded Water Vole Recovery Project and Tesco Bags of Help project delivered 37 practical habitat enhancement days, four days of hedge laying training and four water vole survey training days. 175 volunteers gave 1,035 hours to help with wetland work, restoring over 100m of hedgerow through traditional hedge laying. In combination with corporate volunteer sessions with Severn Trent we enhanced over 1.5km of river and canal habitat. Annual water vole survey sites monitored and uploaded onto GIS.

'Water Vole Highways' have been created along the Coventry Canal and Oxford Canal to help connect water vole populations. Connectivity is one of the major reasons for the dramatic decline in water vole numbers. The 'Highways' now have nearly 100m of water vole 'motels' and 'villas' to soften steel canal banks and have been given an artistic and educational boost by the addition of water vole sculptures by Emma Stothard Sculpture and new interpretation boards.

Media coverage of our work has been well documented with appearances on BBC Countryfile which reached

over six million viewers and BBC Midlands today. The water vole recovery work has been covered in several regional newspapers and on National Grid's landowner magazine 'Gridline'. Two films documenting the hedge laying work along Coventry Canal and river restoration at Guphill Brook, Coventry have been created and uploaded onto the Trust's web site.

Partnership work has been strengthened through working closely with multiple partners notably the Environment Agency, Coventry City Council and National Grid.

Landscape Partnership Working

- » Tame Valley Wetlands NIA was extended to include northern Solihull boroughs and the river Cole
- » Natural Flood Management project developed for North Warwickshire, Fillongley Catchment
- » Local Biodiversity Action Partnership (LBAP) Progress Report 2017 produced with input from 80 partners

The Trust continued to support the Local Nature Partnership by providing secretarial services to the Board. The Board approved the addition of the river Cole corridor and four north Solihull boroughs to Tame Valley Wetlands NIA, to better reflect the catchment, and held a business focused event to engage the Local Enterprise Partnership and commercial sector in its work to discuss opportunities and engage businesses.

Natural Flood Management: a project has been developed with a grant from the Regional Flood and Coastal Committee Local Levy, in conjunction with Staffordshire County Council and Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, to develop two pilot areas for natural Flood management projects working with landowners to identify locations for woody debris dams, restoring hedgerows and creation of back waters and pools. An application for funding from Defra over the wider catchment secured allocated funding during 2017.

Catchment Partnerships: the Trust has continued to be active within two Catchment Partnerships supported by Defra and Environment Agency, engaging new

partners and landowners. Priority projects for Tame Anker Mease and for Warwickshire Avon catchments were submitted for a national scoping for the new Water Environment Grant Scheme for 2018.

LBAP: with invaluable support from Ruth Moffatt, we continued to report on progress since 2010. Highlights included good progress for calcareous grassland (30 ha achieved against a target of 17 ha), restoration of degraded grassland (42 ha achieved, five times target) and restoration of open mosaic habitat (40 ha achieved against a target of 3ha). Species highlights recorded success for small blue butterfly and some progress for the bloody nosed beetle.



Living Landscapes



Tame Valley Wetlands

- "Gateway to the Tame Valley Wetlands' visitor centre opened at Kingsbury Water Park
- » 6,843 face-to-face experiences with the natural environment created
- » 1,282 metres of hedgerow created or restored

The TVWLP Scheme, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), continued a full programme of work throughout 2017 to improve the landscape between Birmingham and Tamworth. At the end of 2017, the TVWLP had secured the vast majority of the cash match funding, volunteer time and in-kind support required as part of the HLF grant. In 2017, nearly 8,000 volunteer hours were generously donated.

Led by a team of staff employed by Warwickshire Wildlife Trust, Staffordshire Wildlife Trust and RSPB, the scheme saw 6,843 participants engaged in its activities (up 50% on 2016). This included 2,100 school children engaged through 61 sessions; 28 events delivered with 3,748 attendees; and 62 training sessions held with 585 attendees. In addition, the scheme's marketing apprentice successfully secured a permanent job at the end of her apprenticeship.

The scheme was viewed by 6.3 million people on BBC Countryfile in May, and throughout the whole of 2017, the TVWLP web site had 31,288 page views (24% increase) and 221,896 engagements through social media (60% increase) compared to 2016.

During 2017, 1,282 metres of hedgerow were created or restored through planting and hedge-laying. At Broad Meadow Local Nature Reserve 19 hectares of wetland were enhanced by Staffordshire Wildlife Trust and Tamworth Borough Council through the establishment of cattle grazing. Over 1km of ditches and waterways were enhanced or restored across various sites, with over 17,200 native wetland plants planted.

2017 was the last full year of funding from HLF. During 2018 the Trust will be working to ensure a strong legacy and continued, sustainable delivery in 2018 and beyond.





Living Landscapes



Dunsmore Living Landscape

- » The £1.2 million HLF Delivery phase began in February 2017
- » The partnership agreed a change in name from Princethorpe to Dunsmore
- » Project delivery began in May 2017, including the first dormice reintroduction

Scheme staff were appointed in April 2017 responsible for practical works, community development and project finance and administration. The first of four scheme trainees started in May 2017 working towards the City & Guilds work-place diploma in environmental conservation.

The work delivered in 2017 included the reintroduction of 38 dormice into Wappenbury Wood, in partnership with Peoples Trust for Endangered Species and the Zoological Society of London.

Access in the area was improved through pathway and waymarking improvements to the Brandon Marsh Onyx Trail, as the first stage in the creation of a sculpture circular walk and new paths, disabled kissing gates, interpretation and waymarking at Ryton Pools Country Park. Three grassland restoration projects were started at Ryton, Coombe and Marton.

The scheme delivered 15 primary after-school sessions, 10 sessions of youth engagement with young people in Willenhall, eight community events and two guided walks. A volunteer group carrying out weekly volunteer sessions was set up and a programme of taster sessions, practical skills training and ecology was delivered making particularly strong ties in Willenhall.

The ongoing business of the scheme was established through quarterly partnership meetings and regular one-to-one meetings with individual partners to progress projects (Warwickshire County Council, Coventry City Council and the Friends of Brandon Wood).







iving Landscapes

Habitat Biodiversity Audit (HBA)

- » Anton Irving founding member of the HBA partnership retired
- » Kier Services England Highways Agency joined the HBA partnership
- » Provided data on Great Crested Newts in Warwickshire to Natural England for use in preparing a Protected Species Strategy which ensures Favourable Conservation Status



The Phase 1 habitat survey: this part of the HBA, surveyed 42 tetrads this year the equivalent to 164 ha, and 48% of the Warwickshire sub-region Phase 1 habitat survey is current (within the last five years).

Ten volunteer surveyors attended a Phase 1 training day at Brandon Marsh in May. We also took part in the species data modelling project funded by Natural England in partnership with Warwickshire Biological Records Centre supplying the phase 1 habitat data and modelling the habitat connectivity for pond clusters. The results were presented at a workshop held in Warwick, in March.

A data sharing arrangement was agreed with the Heart of England Forest to supply the Phase 1 habitat and Local Wildlife Sites mapping dataset for their estate. Hedgerow survey training was provided to parish groups at Radford Semele and Fenny Compton, and to the Warwickshire Natural History Group at Nolan's Wood, Heart of England Forest.

Local Wildlife Sites Project: we surveyed 52 sites for partners and an additional five sites for the Tame Valley project. This compares to 55 sites surveyed in 2016 and 45 in 2015.

Sites surveyed included unimproved meadows at Duke End, Maxstoke, Langley, Ullenhall and an unexpected site in Allesley, which has been added to the Coundon Edge LWS in Coventry.

Ancient woodlands surveyed included New Coppice and Beckswhite Wood in Stratford District and Rough Close Wood in Solihull. Other sites surveyed were; Coton Balancing Pools, Tame Valley; Brinklow Castle and Beaudesert Mount, Henley-In-Arden, both scheduled historic monuments.

Hedgehog Improvement Areas

- » 16 volunteers recruited to the Green and Healthy Rugby Project at Newbold Quarry LNR
- » 11 local businesses engaged in our new Wild Work Days dedicating over 1,500 volunteer hours
- » Community engagement at Bubbenhall Wood 17 events, engaging with 357 people, living in Bubbenhall and the surrounding villages



Both the Solihull and Rugby Hedgehog Improvement Areas continued throughout 2017, with over 5,000 people engaged. Almost 3,000 school children were engaged through educational activities. Footprint tunnel surveys of 32 areas and torchlight surveys of five areas of green space were undertaken across the boroughs with the help of trained volunteers.

Information about the hedgehog projects, and a new Hedgehog Officer position, was covered by a range of media including BBC Midlands Today, BBC Coventry & Warwickshire radio and a variety of local newspapers.

The Rugby project largely focussed on planning and working with local authorities. A statement regarding permeability of barriers and connectivity of green space is now included in the draft of the Rugby Local Plan and

house builders have agreed to implement hedgehog holes in fences across four development sites.

Rugby Borough Council (RBC) confirmed that management changes implemented in 2017 to five green space sites were well received and plans to extend these to further sites in 2018. Changes included reduced grass cutting and planting of trees, which could help to increase hedgehog nesting site availability and invertebrate prey diversity and abundance.

Education Education

- A record number of 22,522 wildlife experiences were enjoyed by children in our region
- 1,040 wildlife themed sessions were delivered by our dedicated education team at our visitors centre and all across the county.
- 405 sessions were delivered in schools and community spaces.



2016 was a great year but 2017 has been even better! We have broken records with our numbers being the best ever with 1,324 more being engaged in outdoor education and activities than last year.

The education team secured funding from Children in Need and worked with a local primary school. The project was already in its third year and we are hoping to extend this project by another three years and double the funding so that we can work with previous cohorts further up the school. The children started with no love for the outdoors but by session 20 have their own forest school fire session.

allowed us to deliver 120 sessions to 341 different children in local primary schools, over 60 toddler sessions and 40 school holiday clubs.

Our nature tots and nature baby sessions continue to be popular with families. Schools return year after year for their school trip. One school has visited every year for over 10 years.





Training and Youth

Training.

- » 11 trainees from the 2016 2017 cohort successfully completed their placements and 12 new trainees started across 6 partner organisations
- » The Trust continued to act as the Learning Centre for a number of other organisations, including London Wildlife Trust and Shropshire County Council.

Eleven trainees from cohort 3 of the Heritage Lottery funded Wilder Career Choice trainees completed their placements and Certificates in Work Based Environmental Conservation in 2017. All trainees have found employment within the sector since completing their year's training. A further 11 new trainees started their Wilder Career Choice traineeships in March and have made very good progress across the year.

Due to a project underspend a further trainee began a 6 month placement in October 2017. Their feedback on the scheme after just 6 months was very positive, with all 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.

In 2017, the Trust was asked to be a key partner in a new skills development programme being delivered by the Wildlife Trust for Birmingham and the Black Country. Funding for the scheme was secured in late 2017 and the Trust will act as the Learning Centre for the project which will begin in late 2018.

Youth Engagement

- » 24 young people engaged in Call of the Wild programme
- » 300 hours of work experience with the Trust
- » Two practical conservation groups of student volunteers established from Coventry and Warwick University

Funded by the People's Postcode Lottery, the Call of the Wild summer holiday programme ran for two weeks over the summer for 11 -17 year olds. Twenty-four young people from Coventry, Bedworth and Nuneaton experienced five consecutive days of nature immersion and connection activities e.g. practical camp and bush craft skills, as well as a range of sensory and awareness raising exercises to tune the participants into the natural world.

Our work experience weeks have been a reliable platform for engaging with gifted and talented young people with an interest in nature and wildlife.

Winter work parties with both Coventry and Warwick University delivered five volunteer sessions involving 31 students at Tocil Wood and Claybrookes Marsh.

We have been piloting a continuing partnership with Nature based youth engagement charity Wild Earth in Coventry. Wild Earth provides intensive six week programmes to vulnerable young people, based on bush craft, nature connection and emotional support. The Trust has worked alongside Wild Earth during part of their last four programmes.

Finally, 2017 has seen us working in partnership with a wide range of organisations such as the SYDNI youth centre, demonstrating our ability to work successfully at delivering outdoor and nature based activities suited to young people.

Volunteers and Community

Volunteers.

- » Almost 40,000 volunteer hours were donated to help the Trust in 2017
- » Compilation of a Trust volunteering development plan

Once again, our volunteers stepped up to the cause and generously volunteered almost 40,000 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 the organisation 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 see volunteer enquiry numbers increase and many new volunteers joining us to help maintain Warwickshire's wildest places!

In 2017 the Trust began planning for the recruitment of a Volunteer Coordinator by developing a plan to further improve our support for volunteers and deliver new and exciting volunteer opportunities for the future.

Community Work

- » 16 volunteers recruited to the Green and Healthy Rugby Project at Newbold Quarry LNR
- » 11 local businesses engaged in our new Wild Work Days dedicating over 1,500 volunteer hours
- » Community engagement at Bubbenhall Wood 17 events, engaging with 357 people, living in Bubbenhall area



2017 saw the launch of our 'Wild Work Days' programme for businesses and organisations to help contribute to our reserves management by booking activity days. Running throughout the year 11 local businesses big and small dedicated over 1,500 hours to helping enhance our reserves. Activities ranging from scrub clearance, wetland work to infrastructure projects made a big difference across the year and helped businesses put something back.

We secured further 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 Newbold Quarry. We hosted fortnightly sessions which recruited a total of 16 volunteers and hope that this will begin the establishment of an autonomous group to help manage the local nature reserve. The group focused on scrub clearance of neglected areas and has made a vast improvement on the site for nature conservation.

Continued delivery of the HLF funded project at Bubbenhall Wood and Meadow Nature Reserve saw a record number of participants on a wide variety of events from fungi walks to bush craft activities. Installation of paths and new access improvements along with a viewing screen make the site a more welcoming place for members. A new volunteer

work party has established to help with the practical management of the site. In 2017 they assisted in planting over 6,000 trees and replacing many fence posts to assist with grazing as well as starting a new woodland management cycle.



Health and Visitor Centres

Health and Well Being.

- » 83 people took part in health and well being projects
- » Over 60 people formally or self-referred to projects
- » Five powerful case studies produced and one media article on our work
- » Over 1,750 volunteer hours

2017 was the most successful year for the Trust's health projects so far, with many new people being referred to health projects from new agencies including in-patient units, housing associations and employment support schemes.

The Environment and Me Project (TEaM) in Coventry, which is funded by the Big Lottery, launched in May. It is the Trust's first partnership project with Coventry and Warwickshire MIND, which has brought strength to the Trusts ability to support volunteers on health projects. 71% of people who joined TEaM in 2017 reported a positive progression towards meeting their individual goals (e.g. meeting new people, sleeping better, learning something new). The project has built on existing and developed new relationships with local agencies in Coventry who are referring people to the project including Change, Grow Live (CGL) and Crisis.

The Your Wild Life Project in Solihull saw the biggest number of referrals it has had in its four years of delivery, with 35 people self-referring or being referred. The project worked across five sites with volunteers, including delivering sessions at the Parkridge Centre. Volunteers have shown significant improvements in their mental well being, with comments including; "I found I had got my self respect back, my pride and a reason to get up in the morning", "I have learnt new skills at Warwickshire Wildlife Trust, along with learning to socialise again".

The project's successful delivery also enabled it to secure additional funding in 2017 from the Active Citizens Fund, Project Dirt and Solihull Community Fund.

Visitor Centres

- » 34,000 visits made to Brandon Marsh Nature Centre in 2017, an increase of 30%
- » 84,000 visits were made to the Parkridge Centre in 2017
- » Warwickshire Wildlife Trust took on the management of the Café@Parkridge

Our Visitor Centres saw an increase in visitors on the previous year which subsequently led to increased income at both sites. New staffing at Brandon Marsh improved membership sign ups through the Centre.

Our new family bird hide was opened in April 2017 and new interpretation boards, trails and activities were installed to encourage more visits from families. Improvements to the Barn, including new carpets, have given us a more attractive meeting room / conference space which will attract more bookings and increase income.

New people counters were installed in 2017 at the Parkridge Centre, enabling us to capture visitor numbers to the Centre and to the reserve. In December 2017, the Trust took on the management

of the Dragonfly tearoom, enabling the Trust to have a much larger presence within the Centre and providing us with an exciting opportunity to recruit new members. The Centre also underwent a significant rebranding and refurbishment before re-opening on 14th December with the installation of new signs throughout the Centre to embed the 'Warwickshire Wildlife Trust' branding.

Two new volunteer groups have been set up at Parkridge, ensuring that our nature area is at its very best for our visitors.

Membership and Communications

Membership

- » The Trust had 23,049 members and 10,179 subscriptions in December 2017, a 3% increase. Membership income increased by 2.4%
- » Retention rate increased by 0.5%

We are pleased to report that recruitment targets for new members were met in 2017. Our recruitment company, Wildlife Fundraising Central Ltd, which the Trust co-owns with six other Wildlife Trusts, performed well, maintaining a stable team of recruiters in the county throughout the year.

As planned, the Trust increased our own internal face to face recruitment activities on nature reserves bringing in amazing numbers consistently throughout the year. Also the Trust managed recruitment promotions online and via the visitor centre's resulting in a good number of new members.

Corporate membership stood at 25 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.

The Trust is very grateful to the following people who remembered local wildlife and gave a lasting gift in their wills this year:

- Anthony William Pratley £2,000
- Michael J Senior £66,000*
- Barbara Elizabeth McLauchlan £2,000
- Leslie Ernest Moore £1,000
- Pauline Marianne Whitehead £14,049**
- Maureen Theresa Duffy £300

*interim distribution
**final distribution

Communications

- » 30% increase in sessions by web site users
- » 45% increase in Facebook followers
- » 8.5% increase in Twitter followers
- » 240% increase in Instagram followers

» New interpretation boards, signage and leaflets for several of our nature reserves and our visitor centres

All of our members received three issues of WildWarwickshire magazine plus an events guide and annual report summary. Our spring edition had an education focus plus updates on Bubbenhall Wood and featured a pull-out pond life spotter sheet for children. Our summer magazine promoted our first live peregrine camera located in Leamington, a celebration of Val and John Robert's work with the Trust, a feature on Warwickshire's reptiles and a feature on development to benefit wildlife. Our winter magazine covered the dormouse reintroduction and the importance of soils and farming practices and an act for nature.

By the end of 2017 we had 4,574 followers on Facebook: our most popular posts included a photo of hurricane Ophelia's dust clouds which reached 10,500 people, a rare bird alert at Bubbenhall with a reach of 5,800, fun bird ID sheet with a reach of 4,600 and a mystery photo which reached 4,100 people.

On Twitter (9,595 followers) top tweets included a picture of waxwings outside the Brandon office with 19,794 impressions, Jordan's cereal farm partnership at Sherbourne Meadows with 9,581, peregrine falcon chicks fledging with 9,314,dormouse release day 9,042 and a video of Nick Baker teaching St Anne's school children about slugs with 5,538.

The number of visits to our web site continues to rise with a 30% increase in sessions by web site visitors

and an increase of 19% in web site users compared to 2016. We are building our local profile with a 64% rise in Coventry, 13% in Solihull 35% in Nuneaton and 39% rise in Rugby. Ensuring social media always included web site links has increased the number of people coming to our web site from these channels.

Our monthly e-newsletter goes out to over 5,400 subscribers with a quarterly volunteer e-newsletter going to 870 volunteers. Our quarterly business e-newsletter is sent to 1,600 local business contacts. We continued to write a monthly advertorial for South Warwickshire Now magazine which goes to 15,500 homes: topics included the best of our reserves for foraging, native versus Spanish bluebells, water vole decline, how to attract more butterflies to your garden and horse chestnut leaf miners.

Annual Report 2017

Financial Statement



53.8%

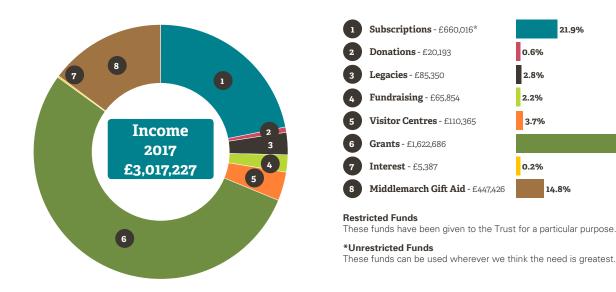
21.9%

0.2%

14.8%

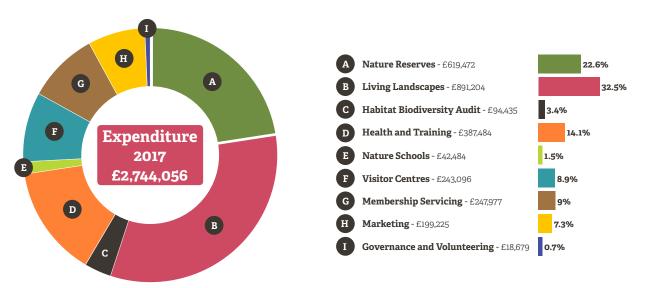
Income 2017 - £3,017,277

The Trust secured £1,622,686 (53.8%) from grants and £660,016* (21.9%) from membership subscriptions. The unrestricted funds provided by Membership subscriptions allow the Trust to maintain and enhance our nature reserves for the benefit of wildlife and the people that visit them.



Expenditure 2017 - £2,744,056

The Trust continues to increase its spending on our Living landscapes (£891,204 compared to £491,060 in 2015 and £641,881 in 2016). We have also increased our spending on our nature reserves by almost £50,000 compared to £520,055 in 2016. We continue to work hard to keep our administration and running costs to a minimum.



A full version of our 2017 Annual Report is available on our web site; www.warwickshirewildlifetrust.org.uk/publications