

# ULSTER WILDLIFE TRUST ANNUAL REPORT 2010/2011



Ulster Wildlife Trust

## Chairman's Foreword

While at school, I read the book *Mourne Country* in which Estyn Evans described the links between humans, their physical environment, economy and culture. Sadly, those links have not been replicated in the way we have governed and managed our world, but hope is at hand. I am much excited by the two great strategic initiatives that have been developed through the Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts (RSWT).

These twin visionary concepts, **Living Landscapes** and **Living Seas** are intended to provide for a balanced approach to managing large tracts of land and areas of sea to ensure not only an increase in biodiversity but also an improvement in quality of life for us all. I am so glad that the Ulster Wildlife Trust will be playing its part in delivering these visions. I must pay tribute to my predecessor, Dr Pat Boaden, for the way in which he helped promote these ideas to our Council and encouraged their adoption.

Introducing these new concepts has meant that we have had to re-evaluate our overall approach to the local environment, and also to reorganise and streamline our organisational structure to position ourselves to reflect the strategic focus on **Living Landscapes** and **Living Seas**. This restructuring has meant that we have seen some members of staff leave the organisation, whose contribution over the last few years I must acknowledge. However, it also means that we are welcoming new staff to head up new teams. I wish them well.

Government has reduced the support it gives to certain aspects of our work. While we are making every attempt to keep all of our programmes running, it is inevitable that there will be reductions in some areas. Over the coming financial year we will be making every effort to counteract any reduction in statutory income by increasing our income generation efforts elsewhere, something I hope all our supporters will help us with.

But all our news is not glum. In March 2011 our membership passed the 10,000 mark and continues to grow at a pace. This is particularly significant as it shows that our work is respected, supported and valued by the public in Northern Ireland. Many of the Trust's projects and activities on the ground, such as the magnificent work undertaken with a range of schools in our *Make Space for Nature School Grounds Project*, would not be possible without the continued funding provided by our members.

I would also like to recognise the many volunteers who make a really positive contribution to our work and through that, benefit the environment as a whole. I must pay tribute to the dedication and great work undertaken by Heather and the staff. Seeing the work at close quarters as I do, reinforces my belief that this Trust really does achieve a lot of success through hard work based on sound judgment. I also thank Pat Boaden for all he did for us here and at RSWT, and my Vice-Chairman, Peter Archdale, for taking on so many of my duties during the period when, for family reasons, I was unable to perform my full role on Council.

I look forward to an exciting year to come.

Joe Furphy  
Chairman

## Structure, Governance and Management

The Ulster Wildlife Trust Ltd is a charity recognised by HM Revenue & Customs registration number XN45269 and a company limited by guarantee registration number NI 12711. The Ulster Wildlife Trust's office is located at 3 New Line, Crossgar, Co. Down, BT30 9EP. The governing documents of the organisation are the Memorandum and Articles of Association. The Ulster Wildlife Trust is part of the network of Wildlife Trusts in the UK, however it is independent in that it raises and spends all its own funds locally and is autonomous in its decision making for Northern Ireland activities.

The Board of Directors of the Ulster Wildlife Trust is for the purpose of this report collectively referred to as UWT Council. UWT Council consists of up to 16 Directors, and meets at least four times between each Annual General Meeting. At the AGM, at least a quarter of the Directors must stand down each year, although they are eligible for re-election providing they have not served for the maximum of eight successive years. A Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Treasurer are elected from its members.

The Council of the Trust is the governing body of the organisation and it is Council that makes the decisions as to UWT's strategic direction and the policies by which it is governed. Having agreed these, their implementation is delegated to the Chief Executive and staff of the Trust.

### UWT Council April 2010 – March 2011

	Date last elected to UWT Council	Date resigned/ stood down from UWT Council
Joe Furphy (Chairman)	29/09/10	N/A
Peter Archdale (Vice Chairman)	29/09/10	N/A
Peter McCloskey (Treasurer)	30/09/09	N/A
John Faulkner	18/09/08	N/A
Tom McClelland	18/09/08	N/A
Lucinda Blakiston Houston	18/09/08	N/A
Ken Brundle	29/09/10	N/A
Margaret Finlay	30/09/09	N/A
Bob Brown	29/09/10	N/A
Jim McAdam	29/09/10	N/A
Philip Lennon	(Co-opted) 17/11/10	N/A
Brigid O'Neill	18/09/08	N/A
Pat Boaden	30/09/09	29/09/10
Duggie Anderson	18/09/08	29/09/10

**Company Secretary & Chief Executive Officer:** Heather Thompson.

**Banks:** Northern Bank Ltd, The Square, Crossgar, Co. Down BT30 9EE.  
Ulster Bank Ltd, 11-16 Donegall Square East, Belfast, BT1 5UB.

**Solicitors:** King & Boyd, 37 St Patrick's Avenue, Downpatrick, Co. Down, BT30 6DW.

**Auditors:** Messrs Campbell and Campbell, 100 University Street, Belfast, BT7 1HE.

# Objectives and Activities 2010/2011

## 1. To support native species by managing and rebuilding quality habitats across NI

We do this by maintaining our network of nature reserves as havens for local wildlife and people. We also deliver projects to protect threatened species like the red squirrel, barn owl and Irish hare.



Bog Meadows Nature Reserve



Basking Shark © J P Trenque

### Nature Reserves

In 2010/2011, the Trust continued to manage its suite of nature reserves across Northern Ireland for the benefit of wildlife and people.

In Belfast, work continued on the Bog Meadows Wetland Restoration Project. Major habitat improvement works included ponds and ditches being deepened and widened. Paths were also upgraded as part of the project and new and engaging information panels were developed and installed on the site. Work on improving the site for people and wildlife will continue into 2011/2012.

Also this year the Trust sold back 6.2 acres of land at Bog Meadows to Milltown Cemetery after it was found to contain burials. This matter has been ongoing for the last two years. Geophysical surveying on the part of the site previously owned by Milltown Cemetery is continuing in an effort to identify any further burials.

Balloo Wetland Nature Reserve in Bangor was recognised during the year by two awards. Firstly it was 'highly commended' in the prestigious Chartered Institution of Water and Environmental Management's *Living Wetlands Awards* and then it received the *Biodiversity Project of the Year* award at the *Sustainable Ireland Awards*. An outstanding achievement for this relatively new nature reserve which we manage in partnership with North Down Borough Council.

Following a review of its nature reserves holdings during the year the Trust withdrew from the management of Ballydyan, Lagan Meadows and Teal Lough. The Trust still maintains an interest in the development of these sites but due to lack of tenure and funding for these specific sites we are no longer actively managing them as Ulster Wildlife Trust nature reserves.

### Action for Key Species

Our Key Species project came to an end in 2010/2011. This project worked to improve the conservation status of several of Northern Ireland's most threatened species including the barn owl, basking shark, and a host of native plant species. The project provided an important insight into the conservation of a wide range of species that will shape future projects at Ulster Wildlife Trust.

## 2. To engage and inspire people and organisations to value the natural world and take practical steps to improve and protect our local environment

We engage with thousands of children and young people to inspire them about their natural environment and show them how they can help to protect it. We also work at the heart of the community helping others to boost the wildlife value of their local parks and green spaces.

### Outreach & Learning

Our *Make Space for Nature School Grounds Project* came to a close at the end of 2010/2011. The project, part-funded by the NI Environment Agency, had been running for four years, and worked with teachers and school children across the province improving their school grounds for wildlife. Such was the success of the programme, we now plan to develop a package that schools can fund themselves.



Make Space for Nature



Victoria Park, East Belfast

Our *Natural World Challenge* programme continued with Caring Breaks this year. This innovative initiative helps adults with learning difficulties explore and learn about their local natural environment, through a structured programme of visits to their local green spaces.

Our *Watch this Space* project, run in partnership with Belfast City Council, continued to go from strength to strength in 2010/2011. The project now includes several Belfast Parks, and runs school visits, Saturday clubs and family events all with the aim of engaging people in Belfast with nature in their local Park.

### Landfill Communities Fund

The Trust continued to administer the Landfill Communities Fund on behalf of several local councils and private operators during 2010/2011. One of the projects approved for funding this year through the scheme was the development of Courtney Hill Nature Reserve in Newry. This project will see the development of a former landfill site into a nature reserve and green space for both wildlife and the local community to enjoy.



### 3. To influence decision makers, in parts of our society and beyond, to take positive action for local wildlife

We lobby government and elected representatives to ensure that legislation and policies are in place to conserve and enhance the Northern Ireland's biodiversity.

#### Strangford Lough

The Trust continued to champion the conservation of Strangford Lough, a European recognised 'Special Area of Conservation' (SAC), and in particular the protection and restoration of the remaining horse mussel beds in the Lough. We met with officials from Europe during 2010/2011 to highlight our serious concern at our government's failure to adequately protect this important site. Throughout the year we have been continuing to lobby officials, both here and in Europe, to ask them to rectify this situation.



Rockpool © J A Welsh



Marine Task Force march on Stormont

#### Northern Ireland Marine Task Force

During 2010/2011 the Northern Ireland Marine Task Force, of which Ulster Wildlife Trust is a lead member, welcomed two new members of staff. Over the last six months, we have been working with these officers to develop and deliver a campaign plan to lobby government officials and elected representatives for new, fit for purpose, marine legislation for Northern Ireland.

#### Influencing Policy

During 2010/2011, the Trust continued to meet with elected representatives at the highest levels in our government. We held several meetings with the Minister for the Environment and the Minister for Agriculture & Rural Development to put our view across on issues ranging from the Wildlife & Natural Environment Bill to badgers and bovine tuberculosis.

We responded to a number of government consultations during the year including; Northern Ireland Economic Strategy, Regional Development Strategy, Local Government Reform, and DoE & DARD Budgets.

We also produced a *Manifesto Asks* document in advance of the 2011 elections, and held meetings with political parties' policy staff. This resulted in some of our key messages being included in party manifesto documents produced for the local elections.

### 4. To ensure we have the systems and resources to carry out our mission confidently and competently

We have a dedicated and skilled Board of Directors and Management Team who together direct the work of the Trust and are tasked with setting strategy, ensuring financial stability, ensuring all statutory obligations are met and that we operate best practice in all areas of work.

#### Membership

Our membership growth continued over the year, exceeding our expectations, growing from 7,938 to 10,014. This allows us not only to become more financially stable but also gives us a greater mandate when talking to government.

Our corporate members during the year were; AES Ballylumford, AES Kilroot, Belfast Harbour Commissioners, Bombardier Aerospace, Calor Gas, CES Quarry Products, Colliers CRE, Denman International, Henderson Group, Lafarge Cement Ireland, Malone Golf Club, McLaughlin & Harvey and Peninsula Print. We would like to thank all our members for their continued support.

#### Funding

We continued to secure funding during the year for various core and project activities. We would like to thank all our funders and partners for their continued support. They were; Ballymena Borough Council, Belfast City Council, Biffaward, Big Lottery Fund, Bombardier Aerospace Foundation, Department of Agriculture & Rural Development, Department of Culture, Arts & Leisure, Down District Council, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, Landfill Communities Fund, Newry & Mourne District Council, North Down Borough Council, Northern Ireland Environment Agency, RSWT, Translink and Tubney Charitable Trust.



Denman International presented UWT Corporate Member Certificate



Members of McLaughlin family 10,000th members

#### Governance

During the year, the Board of Directors approved work towards the development of a new staffing structure for the organisation which will allow us to continue as a leading voice for nature in the new economic context in which we are operating.

The Board also reviewed the risks to which the charity is exposed through the review of the Risk Register and Risk Management Strategy and established systems and procedures to manage those risks.

# Plans for the Future

The Trust will continue to progress its objectives as outlined in the five year Strategic Plan 2008-2013 and review periodically against performance. The staff and Board of the Ulster Wildlife Trust are currently working towards the development of a new strategic plan for the organisation. This plan will run from 2013 to 2018 and will focus on the delivery of the **Living Landscapes** and **Living Seas** visions.

Work over the next 12-18 months will allow us to develop a strategic plan that ensures the Ulster Wildlife Trust continues to make a significant impact for local wildlife, wild places and people for the next five years and beyond.

In developing our new strategic plan, we will be consulting with stakeholders both inside and outside the nature conservation sector, liaising with government, and reviewing our funding structure and marketing practices. We also intend to explore the options of collaborative working and to continue to address the question of the future location of the Trust.



Strangford Lough © M Williams



Farming © J A Welsh

## Financial Review

The income and expenditure for the Ulster Wildlife Trust is split between restricted funds which are funds received from funders for specific projects, and unrestricted funds which are funds received from funders, members and other sources to be allocated to all areas of the Trust's operations.

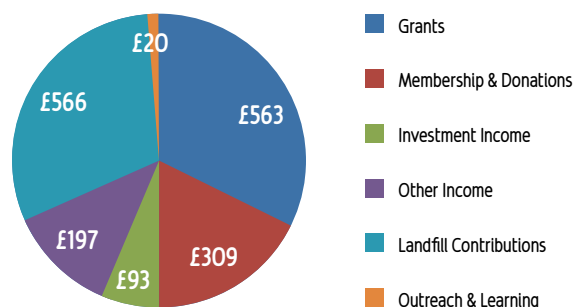
Unrestricted Income for the year ended 31 March 2011 amounted to £805k (to include charges transferred from restricted funds to cover the cost of managing individual projects), being a decrease of 2% for the same period last year. Unrestricted expenditure decreased by 7% and amounted to £736k, giving a net surplus for the year of £69k, against a net surplus of £28k for the previous year.

This surplus has been transferred to the Balance Sheet to provide funding for activities yet to be carried out and to safeguard the future of the Trust.

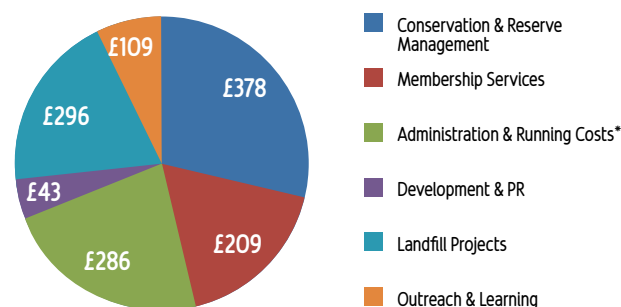
The objective is to set aside financial reserves representing approximately six months of payroll and establishment costs which currently amounts to approximately £210k. The balance on the Financial Reserves General Fund at 31 March 2011 is £271k with a further £150k in a Designated Building Fund.

Restricted income of £1,052k and restricted expenditure of £695k (to include management charges) gives a net surplus of £357k which is partly as a result of contributions from the Landfill Communities Fund which have not yet been distributed to approved projects.

Income y/e 31 March 2011 £'000



Expenditure y/e 31 March 2011 £'000



\* includes indirect costs relating to other departments including Conservation, Nature Reserves Management and Outreach & Learning

## Summary Balance Sheet at 31 March 2011

	£
Fixed Assets .....	600k
Net Current Assets .....	2,807k
Capital Grants .....	(357k)
	<u>3,050k</u>
Restricted Funds .....	2,628k
Unrestricted Funds .....	421k
Life Membership Fund .....	1k
	<u>3,050k</u>

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