



Ulster Wildlife Trust

Annual Report 08/09

Chairman's Foreword

The continuing need for the Trust's vision of 'a naturally diverse environment, rich in native wildlife, valued by all', and our mission to be 'working at the forefront of nature conservation in Northern Ireland', was brought into sharp focus in September at Stormont. Founder Members of the Trust, were hosted there by the Environment Minister, Sammy Wilson MLA to celebrate the 30th Anniversary of the Ulster Wildlife Trust. We were also delighted when the Minister commended the Ulster Wildlife Trust on its work of inspiring and delivering positive action for marine and terrestrial species and habitats.

In this period of reflection on the achievements of the Trust including its management of 22 nature reserves, engagement with thousands of children and young people and its role in

effecting policy change, it was fascinating to see how the Trust has developed from its strong volunteering base to the organisation that it is today, with both its volunteers and staff. It is clear that the Trust is still as relevant today, focusing on local people taking action for local wildlife in local places, as it was when it was set up in 1978. My Trustees and I are proud to be involved in the governance of this developing and dynamic organisation and look forward to tackling the challenges that future years have to offer including - the impacts of climate change, the valuing of eco-systems services and the development of legislation and policy which not only protects but proactively supports the creation and connection of green space across Northern Ireland.

Pat Boaden - Chairman

Structure, Governance and Management

The Ulster Wildlife Trust Ltd is a charity recognised by the Inland Revenue registration number XN45269 and a company limited by guarantee registration number NI 12711. The Ulster Wildlife Trust Headquarters are 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 but is independent from them in that it raises and spends all its own funds locally and is autonomous in its decision making for Northern Ireland activities.

The Directors of the Ulster Wildlife Trust are its Trustees and for the purpose of this report are collectively referred to as UWT Council. UWT Council consists of up to 16 Trustees, and meets at least four times between each Annual General Meeting. At the AGM, at least a quarter of the

Trustees 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 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 2008 – March 2009 with appointment and resignation dates

- Pat Boaden (Chairman) – 04/07/06
- Tom McClelland (Vice Chairman) – 28/09/05
- Peter McCloskey (Treasurer 18/09/08) – 04/07/06
- Ken Brundle – 30/09/04
- Peter Archdale – 30/09/04
- Duggie Anderson – 28/09/05

- Linda Johnston – 16/11/05
- Brian Black – 04/07/06
- Margaret Finlay – 04/07/06
- Joe Furphy – 06/08/07
- Joe Braden-Astbury – 06/08/07
- Brigid O'Neill – 26/09/07
- Lucinda Blakiston Houston – 27/02/08
- John Faulkner – 18/09/08
- Edward Cartin (Treasurer) – resigned 18/09/08
- Heather Harper – resigned 18/09/08

Secretary & Chief Executive Officer
Heather Thompson

Banks: Northern Bank Ltd, The Square, Crossgar, Co Down BT30 9EE, Anglo Irish Bank Corporation plc, 14/18 Great Victoria Street, Belfast, BT2 7BA.

Solicitors: King & Boyd, 17 St Patrick's Avenue, Downpatrick, Co Down, BT30 6DW.

Auditors: Robb & Co Chartered Accountants, 222 Upper Newtownards Road, Belfast BT4 3ET.

Objectives, Activities and Performance 2008/2009

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

“We maintain and expand 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.”

Nature Reserves

The Trust acquired two new nature reserves during the year - Balloo in Bangor and Moyola Waterfoot near Magherafelt.

Balloo is made up of two sites - one a newly created wetland and the other mature woodland. Both sites have a range of native species and provide an excellent opportunity for local people to engage with wildlife in a relatively built up area. Balloo is owned by North Down Borough Council and is being managed by the Trust under a 20 year license.



Balloo Nature Reserve

Moyola Waterfoot forms part of the Lough Neagh / Lough Beg Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI), Special Protection Area, and the Lough Neagh Ramsar site. The Ulster Wildlife Trust is working in partnership with Ballymaguigan Community Development Association to manage the site for its range of features, especially the habitats for *Dyschirius obscurus* (Ground Beetle), a rare beetle whose presence is one of the reasons for its ASSI designation.

Action for Species

The Trust continued to act as lead partner on the Irish Hare Species Action Plan. One of the developments this year was the establishment of a sub-group to look at the potential threat to the Irish hare population posed by the introduced European hare.

The Trust is also lead partner on the Barn Owl Species Action Plan. During the year a 'Barn Owl Fieldworker Scheme' was set up. Over 300 volunteer hours were spent attending training, checking nest boxes and following up on barn owl reports. A barn owl sightings campaign was promoted in the media and elicited over 100 responses. Volunteer fieldworkers will now be visiting these locations to try to locate nest sites.



Irish Hare

To influence decision makers, in all 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.”

Badgers

During the year the Trust continued to lobby the Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development against a badger cull in Northern Ireland. We had several meetings with DARD officials regarding the Department's Bovine TB eradication strategy. Based on the current scientific evidence available the Trust continues to oppose any form of badger cull in Northern Ireland.

Wildlife (NI) Order

The Trust responded to a number of consultations during the year - one of the most important being The Review of the Wildlife (NI) Order 1985. Some of the actions we are calling for are - stronger penalties for anyone found guilty of breaching the Wildlife Order, with custodial sentences as the ultimate measure; year round protection for barn owl nests; and for it to be an offence to intentionally or recklessly disturb or harass marine megafauna (eg basking sharks, seals and turtles).



Barn Owl © M Hamlin

Marine Policy Work

The Ulster Wildlife Trust, as a member of the NI Marine Task Force, continued to lobby government officials and politicians on delivering effective legislation for the protection of our seas through a UK Marine Bill and a NI Marine Bill. During the year the Ulster Wildlife Trust and WWF jointly commissioned a report to provide advice and recommendations, to marine stakeholders and the government, on what is needed to set up an effective network of Marine Protected Areas for Northern Ireland. This report had a

particular focus on marine reserves, as these fully closed sites are the best at delivering full biodiversity protection.

Environmental Protection Agency

As a member of the Coalition for Environmental Protection, the Trust was disappointed that the Minister for the Environment at the time, Arlene Foster, decided against the creation of an independent Environmental Protection Agency in May 2008. We continue to monitor the situation closely and lobby for stronger environmental protection and enforcement in Northern Ireland.



Common Seal © R Kiddu

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

We have a dedicated and skilled Board of Trustees and Management Team who direct the work of the Trust, 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

During the year we secured two years funding to employ a Membership Development Officer for the Trust. This officer is responsible for implementing a membership recruitment and retention plan and for developing our systems so that we provide the best service possible to our members. During the year our membership grew from 6363 to 7059. Our Corporate Members over the year included Premier Power, Bombardier Aerospace, AES Kilroot Power, Belfast Harbour Commissioners, Calor Gas, CES Quarry Products, Denman International, Malone Golf Club, Ecoplastic Recycling, Lafarge Cement Ireland, and Henderson Group. We would like to thank all our corporate members for their valuable support.

Volunteering

Our volunteering project 'Unlocking the Potential' ended in March 2009.

The project enabled us to develop our volunteering systems and procedures so that our staff are well equipped for recruiting and managing volunteers into the future. During the project volunteers put in 31,380 hours. We'd like to thank all our volunteers for their continued support and commitment.



Nature Reserve Volunteers

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 include –

Aggregate Industries, Ballymena Borough Council, BBC, Belfast City Council, Big Lottery Fund (Breathing Places), Coleraine Borough Council, Department of Agriculture & Rural Development, Department for Social Development, Down District Council, Esmee Fairbairn Foundation, Fermanagh District Council, Landfill Communities Fund, Newry & Mourne District Council, North Down Borough Council, Northern Ireland Environment Agency, Omagh District Council, RSWT, Translink and Tubney Charitable Trust.

Governance

The Trustees developed a Governance Handbook during the year to help guide and inform Trustees on their role and responsibilities. Also during the year, a Risk Management Strategy and Risk Register were developed to ensure that all possible risks are identified and minimised.

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 and Learning

Following a very successful pilot last year, we received a further three years funding from NI Environmental Agency for our Outreach and Learning project 'Make Space for Nature School Grounds'. We engaged with over 600 pupils and teachers in over 20 schools. 20 school biodiversity action plans were created, 200 trees and 40m² of wildflowers were planted and 18 mini-beast hotels set up.



Make Space for Nature School Grounds Project

Over 540 school children participated in our 'Watch This Space' Outreach and Learning programme, visiting 11

of Belfast's parks. This project, funded by Belfast City Council, continues to encourage local communities to take more ownership of their local park and improve the parks for wildlife, through school and youth sessions, Saturday clubs as well as summer schemes and events.

Biodiversity Action Plans

The Trust launched three Local Biodiversity Actions Plans during the year, in partnership with Coleraine Borough Council, Fermanagh District Council and Newry & Mourne District Council. These plans will guide the biodiversity work in these council areas for the future and ensure that biodiversity improvements are undertaken in many of these councils' parks and green spaces.

The Translink Biodiversity Project continued into its second year. This year the biodiversity audit was completed, guidelines and training delivered and work was undertaken towards the

completion of the Translink Biodiversity Action Plan.

Landfill Communities Fund

The Trust continued to administer the Landfill Communities Fund for several local councils and private operators. We reviewed and developed our application and grant management systems during the year in line with ENTRUST guidelines. An example of a project funded this year was the Giant Hogweed Project. The aim of this project was to carry out control of this non-native invasive species along sections of the Ballinderry River.



Giant Hogweed © J A Welsh

Plans for the Future

A Living Landscape

The Ulster Wildlife Trust is embarking on one of its most ambitious conservation projects yet – creating a Living Landscape for Northern Ireland. Today, economic pressures and natural processes are further isolating an already fragmented series of natural and historic landscape features. Our vision behind this exciting new initiative

of a Living Landscape is to think big. This landscape-scale approach to land management will fully acknowledge the importance of our natural heritage and people's relationship with the land. Using our own nature reserves as a focus, we want to join up with other areas of land and communities to form an achievable Living Landscape for Northern Ireland.

Location

Due to the growth of the organisation it has become necessary to plan how we will meet the future accommodation needs of the Trust. A process is underway, involving staff and Trustees, to identify the options available to the Trust and to prioritise the Trust's needs, both current and future.



Mourmes © J A Welsh

Financial Review

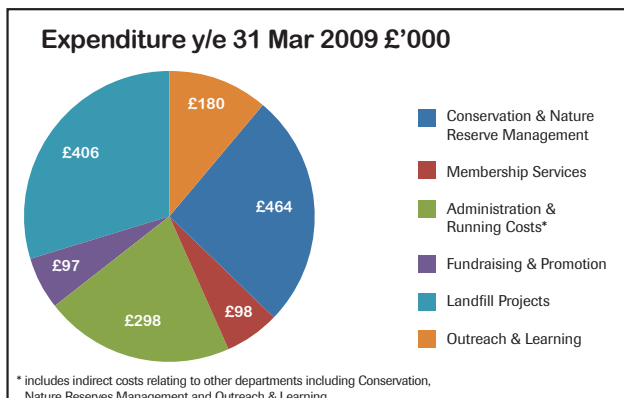
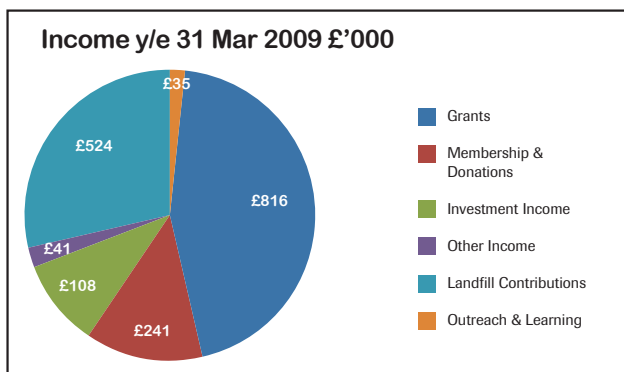
The income and expenditure for the Trust is split between restricted funds, which are funds received from funders for specific projects, and unrestricted funds, which are funds received from funders, members and other sources to be allocated to all areas of the Trust's operations.

Unrestricted Income for the year ended 31 March 2009 amounted to £783k (to include charges transferred from restricted funds to cover the cost of managing individual projects), being an increase of 11% for the same period last year. Unrestricted expenditure increased by 16% and amounted to £744k, giving a net surplus for the year of £39k, against a surplus of £67k 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 reserves representing approximately six months of payroll and establishment costs which currently amounts to approximately £230k. The balance on the Financial Reserves General Fund at 31 March 2009 is £221k with a further £103k in a Designated Building Fund.

Restricted income of £1119k and restricted expenditure of £936k (to include management charges) give a net surplus of £183k which is partly as a result of contributions from the landfill tax credit scheme which have not yet been distributed to approved projects.

Full audited accounts are available on written request from the Director of Corporate Services.



Summary Balance Sheet at 31 March 2009

	£
Fixed Assets	642k
Net Current Assets	2470k
Capital Grants	(393k)
Total	2719k
Restricted Funds	2395k
Unrestricted Funds	323k
Life Membership Fund	1k
Total	2719k

Ulster Wildlife Trust, 3 New Line, Crossgar, Co. Down, BT30 9EP.
Tel: 028 4483 0282 Fax: 028 4483 0888
E-mail: info@ulsterwildlifetrust.org
Web: www.ulsterwildlifetrust.org

The Ulster Wildlife Trust Ltd is a charity recognised by HM Revenue & Customs number XN45269 and a company limited by guarantee registration number NI 12711.