

# ULSTER WILDLIFE TRUST ANNUAL REPORT 2011/2012



Ulster Wildlife Trust

## Chairman's Foreword

**In my report last year, I described how we were changing our focus and concentrating on the Living Landscapes and Living Seas strategic vision. Work on both strands is progressing well. Restructuring to ensure best use of resources to progress our vision is now complete, but has led to the departure of a few members of staff who had given sterling service to the Ulster Wildlife Trust, and relied on the goodwill of others who have changed their duties to enable delivery of the new vision.**

I must make special mention of the role that volunteers play in the Trust's work – as their contribution is invaluable. There are many ways for members to use their talents for the benefit of the Trust, by working on nature reserves, leading groups, or helping with office duties. One most important group of volunteers, who are often not regarded as such, is our Council (Board) members. In the early days of the Trust, Council was largely composed of wildlife experts, whose role at that time was vital. However, times have changed and particularly with the introduction of charities legislation, we have had to diversify our Council membership, bringing on new members with specialist expertise to support the work of the organisation.

I would like to pay tribute to the work of Council over what has been both an exciting and difficult year. In particular I wish to draw special attention to the really outstanding contribution of Dr John Faulkner, our founding chairman, who stood down at the last AGM. John steered us through the early years and was as valuable as a field worker as he was a Chairman. I wish John well in his future work, and I heartily recommend the tome on the 'Natural History of Ulster' which he edited.

Sadly, I must also pay tribute to that outstanding stalwart of the early days, Mervyn Archdale, our first Treasurer, who died recently. The overall impact of that first Council must never be underestimated, and Mervyn's contribution was heightened by the way in which he managed to arrange the establishment of so many of our first nature reserves. Spending time with Mervyn was always memorable, and it was most interesting to learn at his funeral service of his exciting life and of the physical difficulties he had to overcome in his early years. The Trust owes him a great deal, and we must express our gratitude to Peter Archdale, Mervyn's son, who so graciously arranged for donations given in his father's memory to be passed to the Trust.

Lastly, we had to deal with the challenge of the resignation of our CEO, Heather Thompson. I cannot eulogise adequately the great contribution she made in her seven years in the post - a time of many changes which required a firm hand on the helm, exciting opportunities which were grasped, and above all maintaining or establishing relationships through which she raised the profile and credibility of the Trust. In all aspects of her work she was a great success and I wish her well in her new role as the Northern Ireland Director of the National Trust; I know she will also succeed there, and I look forward to increasing co-operation with that organisation.

I was deeply concerned that a replacement would be very difficult to find, but I was greatly encouraged by the exceptional quality of the field of candidates, from which we selected Jennifer Fulton. She has straightaway fully integrated into our philosophy and working practices, and I look forward to her leading us to greater things. Her wide experience of working in central and local government and a range of voluntary bodies will be of inestimable value. Jennifer – I welcome you and wish you well!

**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 is part of the network of Wildlife Trusts across the UK; however, it is an independent organisation in that it raises and spends all its own funds locally and is autonomous in its decision making for Northern Ireland activities. Its office is located at 3 New Line, Crossgar, Co. Down, BT30 9EP.

The Ulster Wildlife Trust is governed by a Board of Directors collectively referred to as the Council. Council consists of a maximum of 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 Honorary Treasurer are elected from its membership.

The Council is responsible for setting the long term vision for the Ulster Wildlife Trust and protecting the reputation and values of the organisation. It provides leadership, enhances decision making and ensures accountability in terms of delivering public benefit and best value services. Operational implementation is delegated to the Chief Executive, supported by the staff team.

### Ulster Wildlife Trust Council April 2011 – March 2012

	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	28/09/11
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	28/09/11	N/A
Brigid O'Neill	18/09/08	05/04/11
Edith Finlay	28/09/11	N/A
Duggie Anderson	28/09/11	N/A
Andy McCrea	Co-opted 28/09/11	N/A
Ben Matson	Co-opted 28/09/11	N/A
Jim Kitchen	Co-opted 28/09/11	N/A
Roy Ramsay	Co-opted 28/02/12	N/A

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

**Banks:** Northern Bank Ltd, 58-60 Market Street, Downpatrick, BT30 6LX.  
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 2011/2012

## 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.



Ballynahone Bog Nature Reserve



Straidkilly Nature Reserve

### Nature Reserves

In 2011/2012, the Trust continued to manage a suite of nature reserves across Northern Ireland for the benefit of wildlife and people.

In Belfast, we moved into the final year of the Wetland Restoration Project at Bog Meadows. Major habitat improvement works were completed, including the deepening and widening of ponds and ditches. An array of new interpretation was developed and installed, including information panels, directional signage, murals and posters.

Another key project during the year was a programme of drain damming at Ballynahone Bog. Using slates and plastic piling, the nature reserves team blocked drains to help prevent the bog from drying out. A significant amount of time was also spent at Straidkilly opening up glades in the woodland to encourage wildflowers and butterflies; at the Umbra removing invasive scrub from the grassland and dunes; and at Slievenacloy controlling scrub and rushes.

Following a review of its nature reserves holdings, the Trust withdrew from the management of Ecos. The Trust still maintains an interest in the development of this site, but due to lack of tenure and funding, we are no longer actively managing it as an Ulster Wildlife Trust nature reserve.

### Action for Barn Owl

During the year, we secured funding from a number of sources to take forward work to conserve our local barn owl population.

Funding from the NI Environment Agency, matched by funding from our members and supporters through our barn owl appeal, enabled recruitment of a part-time Barn Owl Officer who will be working with landowners to help improve habitat for the bird. This officer will also be raising awareness amongst landowners and schools about barn owls and, with the help of a network of volunteers, will be undertaking surveys to establish their location. We also secured funding from the Bombardier Foundation to continue our Home to Roost Project – sessions for children in barn owl 'hot spots' to help them learn more about this iconic, but threatened bird.



## 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.

### Learning and Engagement

Following a cut in our education funding at the beginning of the year, we have been working hard to secure resources for a number of new initiatives with both a land and seas focus. We secured funding from the NI Environment Agency for a one year School Grounds Project that will build on the work completed previously in our Make Space for Nature Project. We also secured funding from the Bombardier Foundation for a programme called Experiencing our Seas, where we will be bringing the sea to life in classrooms across Belfast and Co. Down, and also piloting snorkelling safaris with our Wildlife Watch Groups. We also secured funding for education sessions from a number of corporate members during the year including AES (Kilroot and Ballylumford) Ltd and Peninsula Print & Design.



AES Energy and Nature Programme



Caring Breaks, Natural World Challenge

Our partnership with Caring Breaks, called the Natural World Challenge, went from strength to strength this year and saw us delivering seasonal sessions with adults with learning difficulties from the Belfast area, helping them to discover more about their local natural environment.

We were delighted to secure major funding from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation for a three year project to employ a Living Seas Community Engagement Officer. This officer will work with communities around Northern Ireland to help them protect their local coastal and marine environments.

We entered the fifth year of the Belfast City Council funded outdoor learning programme, Watch this Space, which continued to engage local people with wildlife and biodiversity in their parks. Saturday clubs were run across the city, with the schools programme being extended city-wide to include South Belfast parks. All of this has helped increase awareness and get young people outdoors enjoying and learning to appreciate their local green spaces.

### Landfill Communities Fund

The Trust continued to administer the Landfill Communities Fund on behalf of several local councils and private operators during 2011/2012. Projects approved for funding this year through the scheme included grassland restoration in the Craigavon area.

**Ulster Wildlife Trust, Northern Ireland's leading local nature conservation charity**

# Objectives and Activities 2011/2012

## 3. 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 Northern Ireland's biodiversity.

### Strangford Lough

The Trust has, for many years, been involved in campaigning for protection and restoration of the horse mussel (*Modiolus modiolus*) reefs within Strangford Lough. During 2011, following the publication of research and recommendations commissioned by the Department of Agriculture and Department of the Environment, we came to the conclusion that the EC Habitats Directive was not being adequately upheld by our government, and were left with no other option than to take a further complaint to Europe. This was a decision that we did not take lightly, however, we believe we have done what is right in order to give this special habitat a chance to recover to favourable conservation status and be part of a sustainable future for Strangford Lough.

### Northern Ireland Marine Task Force

During 2011/2012, the Northern Ireland Marine Task Force, of which the Ulster Wildlife Trust is a lead member, had a very productive year. With a focus upon achieving a Marine Bill that is right for Northern Ireland, we organised several key events, briefing meetings and papers. Some events of note were the sea life parade to Stormont, where local young people marched up the mile to meet the Environment Minister and ask him for a Marine Bill for Northern Ireland. We also took members of the Environment and Agriculture Committees for a boat trip around Strangford Lough, where they were briefed on the draft Marine Bill and the Lough's management.

### Influencing Policy

During the year we made use of many opportunities to influence government policy. These have been broad ranging and included departmental budgets, environmental governance, Department of Agriculture estate management, alien invasive species and reform of the Common Agricultural Policy. A key objective in all of our influencing work is to secure healthy and vibrant landscapes and seas, and a Northern Ireland which lives within its ecological limits.

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 continued to grow strongly over the year, from 10,014 to 11,779. Membership support and income is vital to give us a stable financial base and a strong mandate when working with government. Our corporate members during the year were: AES Ballylumford Ltd & AES Kilroot Power Ltd - now combined as AES (Kilroot & Ballylumford) Ltd, Belfast Harbour Commissioners, Bombardier Aerospace, CES Quarry Products Ltd, City Hotel, Colliers International, Denman International Ltd, Henderson Group Ltd, Lafarge Cement, McLaughlin & Harvey, Peninsula Print & Design and Ulster Bank Ltd (Ballynahinch). 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: Ballymena Borough Council, Belfast City Council, Biffa Award, Big Lottery Fund, Bombardier Aerospace Foundation, Department of Agriculture & Rural Development, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, Landfill Communities Fund, Newry & Mourne District Council, North Down Borough Council, Northern Ireland Environment Agency, RSWT and Tubney Charitable Trust.

### Governance

During the year, the Trust carried out a recruitment programme to implement the revised staffing structure for the organisation – centred on the themes of Living Landscapes and Living Seas. With all posts now filled, we now have a full staffing complement to deliver agreed organisational priorities. Updated Articles of Association were adopted by the Trust at its AGM in September 2011.

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.

**Ulster Wildlife Trust, Northern Ireland's leading local nature conservation charity**

# Plans for the Future

**In the coming year, 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 developing a new strategic plan which will direct our work from 2013 to 2018 and determine how best we can use our resources and influence to deliver our vision for Living Landscapes and Living Seas.

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, marketing and people engagement work. Work over the coming months will allow us to develop a 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.



## 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 2012 amounted to £793k (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 remained static and amounted to £735k, giving a net surplus for the year of £57k, against a net surplus of £69k for the previous year.

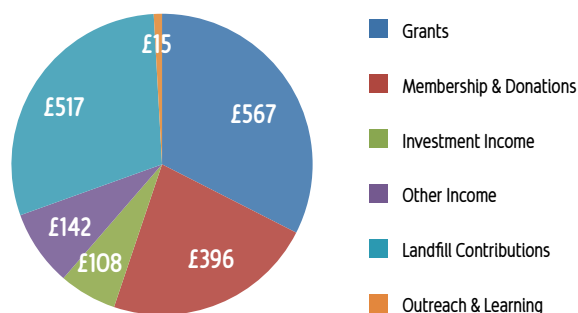
This surplus has been transferred to the Balance Sheet to provide funding for activities yet to be carried out and to safeguard the future of the Trust.



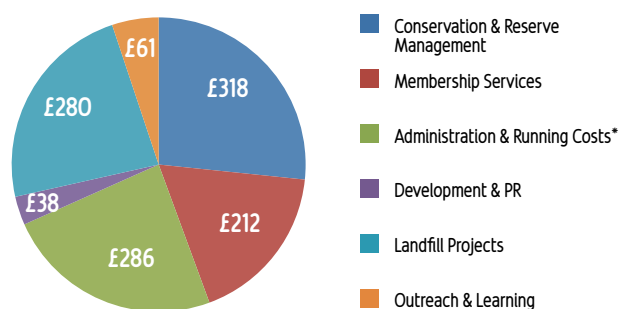
The objective is to set aside reserves representing approximately six months of payroll and establishment costs which currently amounts to approximately £255k. The balance on the Financial Reserves General Fund at 31 March 2012 is £309k with a further £170k in a Designated Building Fund.

Restricted income of £1051k and restricted expenditure of £558k (to include management charges) gives a net surplus of £493k which is partly as a result of contributions from the landfill tax credit scheme which have not yet been distributed to approved projects.

Income y/e 31 March 2012 £'000



Expenditure y/e 31 March 2012 £'000



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

### Summary Balance Sheet at 31 March 2012

	£
Fixed Assets .....	544k
Net Current Assets .....	3,399k
Capital Grants .....	(342k)
	3,601k
Restricted Funds .....	3,122k
Unrestricted Funds .....	478k
Life Membership Fund .....	1k
	3,601k

**Ulster Wildlife Trust,**  
**3 New Line, Crossgar, Co. Down, BT30 9EP**  
**Tel: 028 4483 0282 Fax: 028 4483 0888**  
**Email: [info@ulsterwildlifetrust.org](mailto:info@ulsterwildlifetrust.org)**  
**Web: [www.ulsterwildlifetrust.org](http://www.ulsterwildlifetrust.org)**



The Ulster Wildlife Trust is a charity recognised by HM Revenue & Customs No. XN45269 and a company limited by guarantee No. 12711.