Trustees' Annual Report & Financial Statements 2025/26

BTO
Birds
Science
People









CONTENTS

Opening words	3
At a glance	4
Delivering the evidence base	6
Seeking solutions	8
Putting people at the heart	10
Our volunteer communities	12
Working in partnership	14
Focus on England	16
Focus on Wales	18
Focus on Scotland	20
Focus on Northern Ireland	22
Being fit for the future	24
Thank you for your support	26
Our supporters	28
Financial overview	29
Our publications: 2025	30

BTO staff and BTO Youth volunteers, by Samuel Levy / BTO;
Whinchat, by Edmund Fellowes / BTO; Cudyll Cymru fieldwork, by Phil Pickin / BTO

Birds Science People

FROM OUR CHAIR: PROFESSOR ZOE DAVIES



Our work depends on BTO supporters, who so generously give of their time, resources and expertise. Valuing and growing this support – in terms of volunteer numbers, diversity, retention and skills – is fundamental to our mission as a Registered Charity. To do this, we have invested in new staff, meaning we now have Development and Engagement Coordinators working alongside our volunteers in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. We also have a raft of training courses to build confidence and capabilities, supporting individuals from those who are newer to birding and recording through to our highly experienced observers.

Our remarkable BTO Youth work continues to be a great success. The Youth Advisory Panel has expanded from five individuals to 16, with regional representation from across the country. They run a wealth of activities for young people, including local walks, bird camps, leadership workshops and the annual Youth in Nature Summit. Nevertheless, we are very much aware that the conservation sector, including our volunteers and supporters, still does not reflect the diversity of the wider population. We have therefore continued to focus on engaging those newer to nature and recording, learning from partners and projects like Ripple Northern Ireland and Together for Nature in Thetford, and applying the insights gained to new projects, such as the Birds in Greenspaces survey.

The second half of the current strategy period will be dominated by Bird Atlas 2027–31. We are keen for everyone to be involved, as data will need to be gathered from every part of Britain, Ireland, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man. People of all abilities can play a role in building this vital evidence base for conservation. As former BTO President Baroness Barbara Young of Old Scone eloquently said, the next Atlas will: "*chart our environmental history and make our conservation future.*"

FROM OUR CEO: PROFESSOR JULIET VICKERY



This report period marks nearly halfway in our strategy, launched on Dawn Chorus Day 2023 with two overarching goals of impact for birds and inclusion. Are we doing what we said we would do? This annual report, and the preceding two, together provide a wealth of evidence to reply a confident, but not complacent, yes.

Our ability to 'keep a careful eye' on wintering and breeding bird populations has been enhanced through new surveys and survey tools. We now deliver the Seabird Monitoring Programme, and the Goose and Swan Monitoring Programme. This year we ran surveys for winter and heathland birds and applied Passive Acoustic Monitoring as a powerful tool for more elusive species. Alongside this, our long-term schemes are thriving, with the BTO/JNCC/RSPB Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) achieving record UK coverage in 2025.

Excellent data matter, but it's how these are used that really counts. We have made 30 years of BBS available as an open access dataset, for anyone to use to understand and conserve birds. BTO farmland bird work is drawing on our data to help identify which agri-environmental measures are really delivering for biodiversity, with our multi-year study in Wales recognised by government as exemplary in the quality of evidence. Species work is focused on birds of high conservation concern, including migrants like Nightingale and waders like Curlew. Offshore, BTO seabird research is gathering essential information to ensure the development of wind farms does not compromise their future. Birds are likely to face increasing threats from accelerating climate change, extreme events such as flood and fire, and the emergence of novel diseases. BTO data are invaluable in predicting the impact of these threats, gaining insights and understanding that will underpin better decisions in an uncertain future. Your support of BTO today will benefit birds for years to come – thank you.

AT A GLANCE



During the year, the Trust invested **£7.3 million** delivering, supporting and communicating ornithological research, compared with £6.2 million in 2024/25.

BTO staff published **75 scientific papers** during the year, 35 of which were BTO-led, and 67 of which were collaborative in nature, underlining the strong partnership approach to our scientific work.

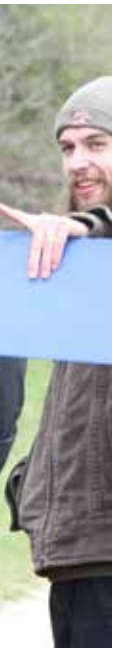
During 2025/26, we received an amazing **£2.8 million** through gifts in Wills, something for which we are phenomenally grateful.

BTO staff delivered **108** training events during the year, attracting **4,283** attendees. The events ranged from small face-to-face survey training sessions through to larger online workshops on bird identification.



"It is encouraging to see that Woodlark and Nightjar are doing well in the sites that are specially protected and managed for them. Most pleasing is to see the recolonization of their former range, demonstrating that they have the capability to return where heathland is both reinstated and well managed." Dr Greg Conway, Senior Research Ecologist.





Some **7,070,577** records, detailing counts of **217** bird species over **30** years, collected through the BTO/JNCC/RSPB Breeding Bird Survey were made available as an open access dataset.

Volunteers contributed **2,840,492** hours of time to BTO, an increase of 4.5% over the previous year. We estimate this amazing contribution to be worth approximately **£57.6m** to science.

Wind turbines and Pink-footed Geese, by David Tipling / birdphoto.co.uk; BBS training session, by David Lyness / BTO; Woodlark, by David Tipling / birdphoto.co.uk

DELIVERING THE EVIDENCE BASE

BTO's high-quality and long-term data, captured through our core monitoring programmes and surveys, deliver the robust evidence base needed to support conservation action and inform policy decisions. As work carried out during the year demonstrates, our data and expertise continue to make a difference.

Wintering gull populations

The UK supports internationally important gull populations, both during the breeding season and throughout the winter months. Despite the UK's importance for wintering gulls, and in contrast to other waterbirds, very few protected areas have been designated for their protection.

Against this backdrop, BTO volunteers carried out the Winter Gull (Roost) Survey (WinGS), helping to strengthen our understanding of where these birds gather and the importance of the sites that they use. Updated winter population estimates were produced for five species: Black-headed Gull, Common Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Herring Gull and Great Black-backed Gull. Additionally, a wintering population estimate was produced for Mediterranean Gull for the first time.

Thanks to the new population estimates, 54 sites were identified as meeting the thresholds of national importance for one or more wintering gull species. Of these, 10 are listed in the Third Special Protection Areas (SPA) review. Only one of the sites was already designated as an SPA for wintering gulls. By improving the evidence available to government and land managers, the survey delivers a stronger foundation for protecting internationally important wintering gull populations and the places upon which they depend.



Nightingale, by David Tipling / birdphoto.co.uk

Monitoring habitat change

Addressing the global biodiversity crisis requires not only actions to secure the conservation of species, but also the protection and/or restoration of the habitats on which they depend. While there is a long history of biodiversity recording by volunteers, at least in Europe, information on habitats is less frequently recorded. Work published during the year, and supported by the Terrestrial Surveillance Development and Analysis partnership and NERC, explored how habitat data collected by those participating in biodiversity monitoring might complement those gathered by paid professionals and earth observation satellites.

The BTO team found that there is potential to expand the extent to which volunteers carry out habitat recording alongside their existing monitoring activities. However, this needs to be delivered in ways that recognise that individuals may lack confidence or motivation, and that habitat recording should not compromise the biodiversity monitoring. The study proposes a framework of six guiding questions, allowing survey organisers to assess the use of their volunteers for habitat recording. Building this understanding into survey design enables us to develop activities that meet the needs for habitat data for monitoring, validation and research.

Bioacoustics

Several pieces of work published during the year highlight the leading role that BTO is playing in the field of bioacoustics. The technology is being used both to identify and monitor species and to test the effectiveness of landscape-scale conservation. One aspect of this work illustrates how the technology can be used to assess the importance of existing protected areas and prioritise future conservation efforts, including for rare and cryptic species often neglected in such assessments.

BTO expertise has enabled use of the technology in a Defra-funded Landscape Recovery project, delivering key data on the status and distribution of birds, bats, terrestrial small mammals and bush-crickets across the Stour, Brett and Box valleys in south Suffolk. Similarly, BTO staff have explored how the technology might support breeding wader monitoring in remote, upland farmland.

Black-headed Gulls, by David Tipling / birdphoto.co.uk

"Thanks to BTO volunteers participating in the Winter Gull Survey, we now have much-needed evidence documenting substantial downturns in most UK wintering gull populations."



SEEKING SOLUTIONS

As our research on breeding wader populations and avian disease demonstrates, BTO is delivering important work in key areas. By doing so, we are providing the robust evidence base and expertise needed to find solutions for birds, people and the wider natural world.

Enabling species recovery

BTO is a cornerstone of national efforts to recover breeding wader populations, and over the year we have continued our work to monitor their populations, collect and synthesise evidence, and engage and support stakeholders in wader conservation. These actions, together with our reputation as providers of robust, high-quality science, mean that our voice carries significant weight, from the grassroots up to government decision-makers.

We have continued to work as part of the East of England Curlew Recovery Project, monitoring the fortunes of headstarted individuals through a combination of colour-marking and GPS-tagging. This approach is enabling us to compare their survival, habitat use and behaviour to those of wild-raised birds. By doing this we are providing a comprehensive picture of the effectiveness of headstarting as a conservation intervention.

We have also been examining the effectiveness of nest fencing as a conservation tool to protect Curlew nests from would-be predators. This work, part of the Curlew Solutions Trial, has revealed that nest fences can deliver a sevenfold increase in hatching success. However, Curlew chicks still face significant challenges after they leave the nest, so additional measures to aid chick survival through to fledging are likely to be needed, and this is where our research is now focused.



Fitting a tag to a Curlew, by Samantha Franks / BTO

Work tracking Curlews in the Yorkshire Dales National Park delivered additional evidence on the needs of these birds, as a BTO Research Report published in the year revealed. Data from the tags enabled BTO researchers to infer nest and brood locations, together with breeding outcomes, from movement patterns of the tagged birds. Such information would be difficult to capture by using other methods.

We have also investigated the effectiveness of policy approaches, notably agri-environment schemes and protected areas, as a means of addressing declines in wader populations breeding within lowland wet grassland. The results of this work indicate that while wader agri-environment schemes can support wader populations, we really need to deliver high-quality habitat at sufficient scale if we are to increase wader populations. This knowledge is helping to direct limited conservation resources more effectively.

BTO's work to support the recovery of breeding wader populations, based on a combination of long-term projects and targeted fieldwork, will benefit from a well-supported fundraising appeal launched in spring 2026. Thank you to all who have so generously contributed to this.

Caught on camera

Nest predation is an important cause of nest failure in many species. Conservation interventions to support threatened birds often involve measures to reduce the levels of nest predation, and may include the lethal control of predators. There is, however, a lack of information on the identity and importance of different nest predators in different landscapes, making it difficult to deliver appropriate and effective action.

Thanks to funding from SongBird Survival, BTO has been able to work with a broad range of partners to collate and analyse nest camera footage from across the UK. Data were drawn from 46 nest predation studies, comprising 2,088 nests and 609 predation events across 24 prey species. The results revealed that wader nests were predominantly predated by mammals, while those of songbirds were largely predated by corvids. The study also highlighted landscapes and species for which knowledge gaps remain, thereby directing future research efforts.

CASE STUDY: RESPONDING TO DISEASE

As BTO data reveal, emerging infectious diseases can have a significant impact on wild bird populations. Being able to identify these diseases and their impacts enables us to inform responses, both to current and future outbreaks.



Robin at mealworm feeder, by David Tipling / birdphoto.co.uk

Informing best practice advice

Best practice advice on feeding wild birds is shaped by scientific research, to which BTO has made a series of key contributions. A recent RSPB-led review, with significant BTO input, has prompted a shift in how we feed wild birds. The shift is part of our collective efforts to mitigate the impacts of the disease finch trichomonosis, which has devastated our Greenfinch and Chaffinch populations. Our data and expertise have been of particular importance, providing the robust evidence upon which such policy decisions can be made.

BTO research has played a central role in our understanding of finch trichomonosis and its effects. Analyses led by BTO staff show that declines in adult survival associated with the disease have been more pronounced in residential settings, consistent with elevated transmission risk at garden feeding stations. Ongoing collaborative research between the RSPB, Institute of Zoology and BTO is further examining how feeding practices influence disease dynamics. Results from this work, led by Hugh Hanmer and Kate Plummer, identify the post-breeding period as a time of elevated outbreak risk in gardens. These findings have directly informed the view that best practice advice on when to feed should include a seasonal component.

Data from our core monitoring schemes will help to determine whether the shift to a seasonal approach is working. Not only will these data tell us what is happening to finch populations, and indeed to those of other species, but they will also help us to identify other changes that might be linked to the shift in feeding advice. Working alongside our partners in Garden Wildlife Health, we will continue to collect much-needed information on disease. While disease risk is just one aspect of the wider discussion around feeding wild birds, the current evidence suggests these adjustments represent the next stage in refining best practice. Through Garden BirdWatch, and our wider research programmes, we will continue to lead in evaluating how feeding influences bird populations – including areas where the scientific evidence remains limited – and we will refine our guidance as our understanding develops.

Becoming better prepared

A broad suite of work has been delivered by BTO in response to the outbreak of high pathogenicity avian influenza (HPAI) in waterfowl and seabirds. Much of this work drew on BTO's long-term datasets, revealing the species affected and the impact on their populations. It highlighted effects extending into other species groups, including some birds of prey, and documented evidence from a range of sources – published in two special issues of the Trust's scientific journal *Bird Study*.

In addition to providing a robust evidence base, the work also examined the effectiveness of conservation interventions and assessed the vulnerability of wild bird populations to HPAI. These latter two pieces of work will inform our response to future outbreaks, meaning that we will be better prepared should another HPAI outbreak occur.



Gannet with nesting material, by Liz Cutting / BTO

PUTTING PEOPLE AT THE HEART

Volunteers are at the heart of BTO, enabling us to collect, analyse and leverage long-term data on birds and the challenges that they face. But being involved with BTO also delivers for people, providing rewarding experiences and supporting the development of personal interests, as work this year demonstrates.

Birds in Greenspaces

Urban greenspaces play a central role in connecting people with nature, and this role is likely to grow in importance as our own populations become increasingly urbanised. Perhaps surprisingly, we know relatively little about the importance of these spaces for birds and other forms of biodiversity. A project piloted during the year set out to address this, and to do so in a manner that would reach new audiences and capture their needs from the very beginning.

Pilot work for Birds in Greenspaces, delivered primarily in Cambridge, Glasgow, Hull, Londonderry/Derry, Newport (Wales) and Thetford, helped to make the project more inclusive and more accessible by identifying potential barriers to participation. Working with London-based charity Sense, for example, we co-created a sensory resource pack for disabled people with complex needs, focused on exploring greenspaces to provide ways into the project. Similarly, we worked with Orchardville, who support people with learning disabilities or autism in Northern Ireland, to run themed activities to build confidence.

The first full year of the survey launched in spring 2026, supported by a suite of resources and a smartphone app, the latter again developed to be accessible to all. The app contained both a simple means of logging birds seen in local greenspaces and a tool for capturing people's perceptions of bird diversity in greenspaces. The tool, called BIO-WELL, was developed by scientists at the Durrell Institute of Conservation and Ecology at the University of Kent and aims to quantify the effect of biodiversity on well-being. The project will run again during 2027, and will both collect valuable data on birds using greenspaces and enable participants to experience and build a deeper connection with their local area.

Collaborative solutions

As BTO has so successfully demonstrated over its 90-year history, the participation of volunteers in science can yield significant benefits – for birds, for science and for people. However, we know that some audiences are under-represented within the volunteer base participating in community science, and there are parts of the UK where the volunteer base is particularly thin. This is certainly true of Northern Ireland, where the numbers of volunteers participating in biological recording are particularly low, not just for BTO surveys and schemes but also for those of other organisations.

A study led by BTO staff, and supported by the Terrestrial Surveillance Development and Analysis Partnership – comprised of the UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology, BTO and JNCC – set out to explore the reasons for the low levels of participation in Northern Ireland, and potential remedies. The study used an initial questionnaire to stakeholders, coupled with semi-structured interviews and the collation of information on biological recording in Northern Ireland. The results of these different components were brought together in a series of workshops, where the findings were discussed and solutions recommended.

Work has already started to implement solutions, including efforts to increase staff capacity to support more volunteers, secure greater collaboration between organisations, and increase awareness of the natural environment and the role of biological monitoring amongst the wider public. Such foundational work should help to increase engagement with and participation in biological recording in Northern Ireland, with the lessons learned likely to be equally applicable in other areas with a low population density, or difficulties with access (such as those resulting from poor public transport networks or challenging terrain).

New website launches

We were able to relaunch the BTO website (bto.org) during the year, thanks to a major piece of work delivered in partnership with Vida Consulting. Thanks to its responsive approach, the new site has been built for mobile devices, recognising that 60% of users now access sites on their phones. The site is faster, easier to navigate and more accessible, making it easier for people to find and use the wealth of information that we hold on birds and their populations. The work included a significant upgrade to BirdFacts, a core part of the website and one which brings together information from across our surveys and projects.

Urban greenspace Grey Heron, by David Tipling / birdphotoco.uk

"BTO has been supporting us as we've worked on a new pilot project, looking at the impact parks and green spaces have on the carbon footprint of the areas they serve. Together, our complementary projects will help to ensure that parks and green spaces continue to work hard for both people and wildlife."
Fields in Trust



OUR VOLUNTEER COMMUNITIES

BTO's volunteer communities sit at the heart of our organisation, enabling our work through their kind contributions. The longevity of these communities is testament to both their commitment and our collective belief in the value of the work that we are doing for birds and for people.

Garden BirdWatch at 30

During the year we clocked up 30 years of BTO Garden BirdWatch, our core scheme for monitoring the changing fortunes of birds and other garden wildlife. That the project has been able to deliver so much, both in terms of science and engagement, is down to its volunteers. Garden BirdWatch is self-funded, and thanks to the generosity of its participants – who subscribe, donate and leave gifts in their Wills – we have been able to generate a growing and significant legacy of knowledge and understanding.

The volume of observations submitted (11 million weekly sets and counting), and the species records that these contain (148.3 million of c.500 species), delivers a valuable evidence base. As well as revealing how species use our gardens and what is happening to their populations, the data inform approaches to garden design and management, enabling us to make gardens better for birds and people.

By the end of the first year of the project (1995), some 2,526 volunteers had joined and were submitting records. Incredibly, three decades on from that first year of recording, 407 of those participants are still with us and entering weekly counts. Over the intervening period we have received data from 44,708 participants.

Papers published using data generated by Garden BirdWatch volunteers include high-profile work on the emergence of the disease finch trichomonosis, publication of the first-ever garden butterfly trends, and presentation of evidence explaining the evolution of a new wintering strategy in Blackcaps. The project has evolved over time, moving from paper forms to an online system, bringing in other taxa recording alongside birds, and developing new approaches for analysing large datasets.

Future work will focus on making Garden BirdWatch more accessible, broadening opportunities for people to increase their engagement with nature and science through participation. The development of a smartphone app will be key to this work, supported by strengthening the community aspects of the project and other initiatives.



Breeding Bird Survey training session, by David Lyness / BTO

Learning through volunteering

Our approach when working with volunteers is to provide support, make them feel valued, and demonstrate their important role in our response to the biodiversity and climate crises. By investing in our volunteers we not only ensure the continued collection of the biodiversity data that is so urgently needed, but also that we empower them as they develop their skills and grow in confidence.

One of the best ways to learn is through participation, supported by training and mentoring opportunities. During the year we delivered 108 training events. These secured 4,283 attendees, representing 2,874 individuals. From field-based sessions on the BTO/JNCC/RSPB Breeding Bird Survey through to online introductions to the identification of particular groups of birds, there were plenty of opportunities for our volunteers, and others interested in developing their skills. We also supported relevant industries, such as ecological consulting, through the provision of bespoke training.

Building on the success of our online training programme, our training team is now developing an e-learning platform. This will allow us to offer a much broader range of learning material, delivered in a more accessible format and to a much larger audience.

Governance and leadership

We are very grateful to our Board of Trustees for their hard work, expertise and advice. Our charity benefits enormously from their commitment, support and challenge, and we deliver more and better as a result.

Garden birdwatcher, by David Tipling / birdphoto.co.uk

"Why have I contributed to Garden BirdWatch for so long? There are two reasons. The scientist in me recognises the importance of this impressive citizen science project. And second, the boy birder in me finds it hugely enjoyable and rewarding to create space for nature in my own garden, follow its ups and downs, and ask why? I never imagined I would ever have a garden inhabited or visited by 69 species of birds together with all of the other wildlife, and feel I am making a difference. I am very fortunate." Sir John Lawton



WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

We are collaborative and facilitatory, working with partners to achieve our collective goals. During the year, these partnerships have helped to deliver important research and evidence, as well as enabling us to reach and support a broad range of communities and individuals.

Detecting and responding

BTO is part of Vector-Borne RADAR, a multi-disciplinary, UKRI and Defra-funded project, focused on understanding the emergence and transmission of mosquito-borne viruses of wild birds in the UK. The project, which is running from 2023 to 2026, builds on an existing partnership that has been working collaboratively to investigate Usutu virus. Since it was first detected in 2020, Usutu has impacted UK Blackbird populations, and BTO data and expertise have helped to track its emergence, impact and persistence.

From the work on Usutu, it became clear that enhancing surveillance for mosquito-borne viruses in the UK would further safeguard biosecurity. West Nile virus (first detected in July 2023) and Usutu primarily cause disease in wild birds, but this can 'spill over' to humans and other animals via mosquitoes (the insect vector).

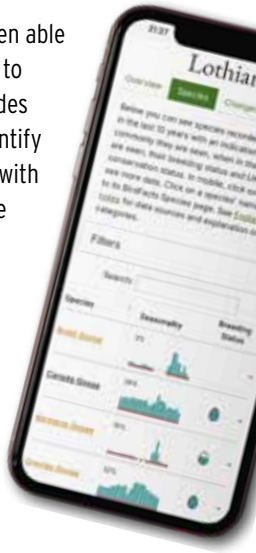
The Vector-Borne RADAR project, with its multi-disciplinary approach, is enhancing wild bird surveillance through engagement with wildlife rehabilitators, zoos and other stakeholders, while also sampling native and migrant birds in areas deemed at high risk of viral incursion. As our climate continues to change, so there is an increased risk of mosquito-borne diseases emerging and persisting in the UK. This partnership work improves our readiness for this eventuality, and enables us to better understand what impact such diseases might have on birds and on people.

Empowering communities

Growing numbers of groups and communities are looking to collect information on the biodiversity present in their local areas. The resulting data may be used to address specific needs, such as informing management of particular sites, or to support Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS). Support for local monitoring is being delivered in various ways, including through the government's Natural Capital and Ecosystem Assessment (NCEA) programme.

BTO has been working with its partner JNCC – already involved in many of our core surveys and with NCEA – to deliver more information and support at the local level. This is being achieved in two main ways. First, we have been able to pull information from across BTO schemes and surveys to produce an online resource that summarises how birds are faring in individual counties or administrative areas relevant to these LNRS. This tool is called 'BirdFacts Places' and it is the regional counterpart to our existing 'BirdFacts Species' resource.

Second, and thanks to NCEA funding, we have been able to compile and publish a guide for those wishing to carry out local monitoring work. The guide provides materials that help individuals and groups to identify the best monitoring approaches for their needs, with relevant tools, options and worked examples. One additional benefit of this work is that more local monitoring will be carried out in ways that allow direct comparison with figures collected through national monitoring schemes. By doing this, it becomes possible to place local results into a national context, adding valuable evidence to local decision-making processes.



The state of nature

State of Nature reports for the UK and its constituent countries have been published regularly since 2013. Providing the most up-to-date information available for species trends, they deliver a vital perspective on how biodiversity is faring nationally. The reports are produced as a partnership between conservation NGOs, research institutes and universities, with the statutory conservation agencies joining as full signatories from 2019 onwards. In total, some 66 organisations were involved in the most recent report.

The reports provide a common evidence base on the state of biodiversity, the pressures it faces, and the benefits of conservation action, communicating this assessment widely and effectively to a broad suite of target audiences. In June 2025, the State of Nature trend data were made available through open access, delivering long- and short-term trends in abundance (753 species) and occupancy (4,979 species) across the UK.

Providing species-level information as open data allows for wider participation in analysis and a more detailed identification of patterns in the data, the latter increasing the chances of identifying the likely drivers of the species trends seen.

Blackbird, by David Tipling / birdphoto.co.uk; Bird surveyors, by David Tipling / birdphoto.co.uk; Great Crested Grebe, by Philip Croft / BTO; Oak woodland, by David Tipling / birdphoto.co.uk.



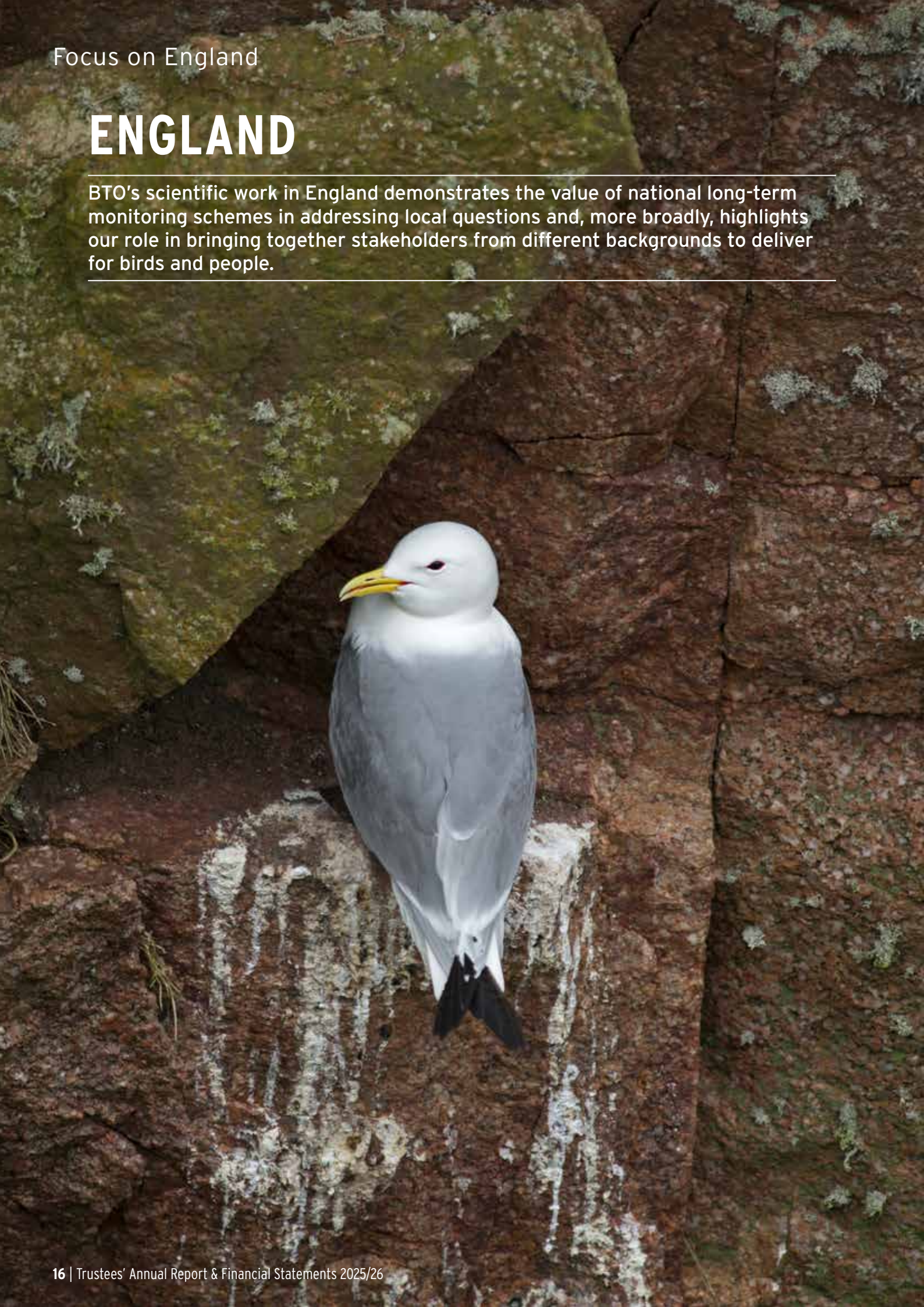






ENGLAND

BTO's scientific work in England demonstrates the value of national long-term monitoring schemes in addressing local questions and, more broadly, highlights our role in bringing together stakeholders from different backgrounds to deliver for birds and people.



Effective compensation

Offshore renewables are part of our response to the climate change emergency, but it is important that the development of these should not unduly impact birds and other forms of biodiversity. Proposed developments in English waters, for example, have now reached a stage where adverse effects on several seabird Special Protection Areas cannot be ruled out, resulting in a need for compensation measures. There is, however, significant uncertainty regarding the appropriate scale of compensation required for a given level of impact.

Such uncertainty prompted Natural England – on behalf of the Collaboration in Offshore Wind Strategic Compensation group – to commission BTO to carry out an independent, evidence-based review of existing methods, and specifically those relating to the use of artificial nest structure compensation measures for Kittiwakes.

BTO staff identified a number of issues with current approaches and made a series of recommendations that, together, improve how artificial nest structures are delivered and their effectiveness assessed. The team also identified a need for more and better data on Kittiwake populations. This evidence will be used to inform future guidance on suitable approaches for calculating the scale of seabird compensatory measures and efforts to ensure that these deliver the promised outcomes.

Farming for wildlife

Working with colleagues at the UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology and Natural England, BTO staff have been involved in research examining whether agri-environment scheme options are delivering benefits for England's butterflies. Data from the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme and the Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey – the latter incorporating data collected by BTO volunteers – were used to look at this question.

The results indicate that agri-environment schemes – where landowners receive payments for implementing management options that deliver environmental benefits – have a potentially significant role in supporting butterfly abundance across both lowland and upland landscapes in England. The study found that butterflies appear to respond more strongly at the landscape scale than the local scale, suggesting that agri-environment interventions should be delivered across spatial areas beyond those of individual fields and farms. Such an approach could be achieved by incentivising clusters of neighbouring farmers to take up beneficial options. One agri-environment scheme, the Sustainable Farming Incentive, seeks to incentivise very widespread uptake of easily applied options, while another (Landscape Recovery) seeks to support multiple landowners across a landscape, helping them to implement more targeted environmental improvements. The results of the study indicate that the delivery of beneficial options at scale through either scheme could be positive for England's butterflies.



Recovering raptors

BTO research is supporting the return of rare breeding raptors to their former haunts, as evidenced by our work on the movements and habitat use of young Goshawks. This species, which is recovering from the historical impacts of persecution, is of significant conservation interest and it is vital that we have robust evidence to inform efforts to support its continued recovery.

BTO staff, working under relevant licences, fitted 29 Goshawk chicks with GPS tracking devices, which automatically download location data via the mobile phone network. The resulting GPS fixes revealed both the extent of the movements made by the birds and the habitats they used during their first few months of independence. The young birds settled on the periphery of their parents' breeding habitat, and centred their activities on farmland and farmland edge.

The relatively short dispersal distances covered by young birds in this study indicate that a range expansion out of the species' forest strongholds might take some time. However, the ability of young birds to take advantage of non-forest habitats does suggest that expansion is highly probable, especially if combined with a continued reduction in persecution and access to favoured prey.



Goshawk chick being ringed, by Mike Toms / BTO; Gatekeeper, by Liz Cutting / BTO

Kittiwake, by David Tipling / birdphoto.co.uk

WALES

The expertise of BTO Cymru staff on Welsh habitats, biodiversity and culture means we ensure that BTO's national monitoring surveys and research is relevant to Wales.



Monitoring Welsh raptors

During the year, some 300 volunteers participated in Cudyll Cymru, our Welsh raptor monitoring initiative, visiting 400 survey areas and submitting nearly 9,000 records. The project seeks to increase the evidence base for raptors across Wales, by focusing on five widespread species: Buzzard, Red Kite, Sparrowhawk, Kestrel and Raven – the latter classed as an honorary raptor because of the ecological similarities that it shares.

Initial work on the project was funded by a two-year grant from the Nature Networks Programme (a scheme delivered by the Heritage Fund, on behalf of the Welsh Government). Although this funding ended in February 2026, further funding from the programme will support the project through until 2029. A key component of the project is work to help volunteers gain skills and experience. In addition to the resources that are provided in both Welsh and English, there are one-to-one online 'surgeries' where volunteers can seek and receive support from the Raptor Monitoring Coordinator.

Over the coming months the Cudyll Cymru team will roll out even more volunteer support, delivering this through a network of volunteer representatives. These will be centred around 'Species Reps' – who will provide species-specific expertise and support – and 'Community Reps' – who will help us engage and support groups that are historically under-represented among BTO volunteers. In addition to growing the volunteer base, the project will expand its focus to cover other raptor species, and there are also plans to build on the success of the inaugural Welsh Raptor Convention, held in Aberystwyth in January 2026.



Cudyll Cymru vantage point watch, by Phil Pickin / BTO
Sparrowhawk, by David Tipling / BTO

Increasing core coverage

The main scheme for monitoring the fortunes of the common and widespread breeding birds in Wales – the BTO/JNCC/RSPB Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) – is continuing to deliver vital information. Thanks to the efforts of 359 volunteers, the scheme is able to deliver population trends for 60 species. The latest report, published during the year, shows that a range of farmland birds are still struggling in Wales, with the once-common Yellowhammer at an all-time low. Meanwhile, the worrying decline in Curlew populations in Wales continues apace, along with the long-term fall in the numbers of Rooks.

2025 was the best year on record for BBS coverage in Wales, breaking the previous record set in 2015. This reflects the efforts of the BTO Cymru team and their programme of face-to-face training sessions focusing on the project. Sessions were held at nine venues across Wales during spring 2025, coupled with an additional online session. A total of 99 people attended these sessions, and 31 then took on a BBS square for the 2025 survey season.

The survey provides the evidence base that underpins effective conservation action, allowing us to identify which species need help, where efforts should be focused, and whether interventions are working.

Birds and pollinators

BTO has continued its work with the Environment and Rural Affairs Monitoring and Modelling Programme (ERAMMP), which is providing scientific evidence and analysis to support the Welsh Government's land management schemes. The schemes are designed to address the biodiversity crisis and mitigate climate change impacts. The programme of work, which brings together 23 partner organisations including BTO, has already delivered an amazing body of evidence, something which has drawn admiration from across Europe.

BTO work is centred on birds and pollinators, with a particular emphasis on the Sustainable Farming Scheme and its (pre-Brexit) predecessor the Glastir agri-environment scheme. The results of the bird work demonstrated where the Glastir scheme has delivered for birds. This is particularly evident for woodland birds, where woodland management approaches involving stock exclusion have benefited birds by promoting understorey vegetation, which is used by many species for feeding or nesting. Importantly, the BTO work also demonstrates where management approaches could be improved, thereby providing evidence in support of future policy development. Land management schemes are an important tool across the UK, so the work in Wales, with its highly integrated approach, provides a valuable model that could be followed elsewhere to benefit biodiversity.

SCOTLAND

Throughout the year, BTO Scotland staff and volunteers continued to deliver important research on some of the country's most iconic species, and worked to upskill our existing volunteer base and attract new participants and supporters.



Informing fishery management

A significant component of our breeding Goosander population is to be found within Scotland, where the species has been the subject of study by BTO staff. More broadly across their European range, Goosanders are subjected to pressures from shooting, which stem from the birds' perceived impacts on fish stocks – both wild and farmed. Licences to kill Goosanders may be granted at sites where conflicts are thought to occur and where appropriate non-lethal measures have been shown to be ineffective. Licences to kill Goosanders usually stipulate 'shooting to scare', aiming not to significantly reduce the population size but to deter individuals from using an area.

There is a lack of information on the impact of Goosanders on fish stocks, and significant gaps in our understanding of the movements and foraging behaviour of these birds. Addressing these gaps, through the provision of robust evidence, will enable us to evaluate the possible impacts on fish stocks and clarify the efficacy of 'shooting to scare' as a management approach.

One of the biggest challenges faced by researchers seeking to collect movement data for Goosanders is the birds' extensive ranging and underwater foraging behaviour, coupled with difficulties in attaching tracking devices and limitations of available tracking technologies. The BTO Scotland team set out to address this challenge through the development and testing of a new approach.

The study showed the potential of GPS tracking technology for this species, but found that tag retention remains a key limitation, due to active removal of the tags by the birds. While further work is needed to deliver improvements in attachment methodology, the tracking data collected revealed that ranging behaviour differed between two river catchments in central and southern Scotland.

Understanding change

BTO Scotland staff have been at the fore of much of our ongoing work on seabirds and the various factors impacting their populations. One aspect of this work has been a review of the mechanisms by which climate change is affecting our internationally important breeding seabird populations.

The review, which covered 25 species, identified some important knowledge gaps, concerning both the species and the geographic regions for which data were available. The most frequently studied species were Guillemot, Kittiwake and Shag, but relevant data were sparse or absent for many of the others.

Despite the knowledge gaps, evidence examined in the review highlighted the importance of climate impacts operating through the food chain and severe storm events. These findings indicate that conservation efforts directed at our seabirds should seek to prioritise the management of fish stocks near to breeding colonies, alongside coastal management options that protect vulnerable colonies from storm events. Importantly, the review also shows where future research efforts should be targeted.

Gulls and people

Many of our breeding gull species are opportunistic foragers, and many have expanded their foraging behaviours to take advantage of foods made available because of human activities. Use of anthropogenic food sources has been linked to increases in some breeding gull populations, especially those located in urban areas. Such increases have led to concerns around the potential for gull-driven disease transmission and the contamination of waterbodies, as well as the nuisance associated with noise, perceived aggression, and fouling by gulls.

BTO researchers have secured a better understanding of how gulls use anthropogenic food sources, informing the conservation and management issues associated with this change in foraging behaviour. By fitting GPS tracking devices to Lesser Black-backed, Herring and Great Black-backed Gulls from the same Scottish colony, the team was able to identify differences in the foraging ranges, distributions and habitat selection. While tagged Herring and Great Black-backed Gulls strongly selected for landfills and coastal habitats, Lesser Black-backed Gulls primarily used agricultural areas.

The tagging revealed that most of the habitats used by the gulls were linked to human activities, and there was a high degree of overlap in the sites used. This highlights the risks associated with future changes in the availability of anthropogenic food resources, such as increased competition between the gulls and increased opportunities for human–gull conflicts. The information gained will help to inform management actions and mitigate conflict with humans, particularly around the use of licensed control.

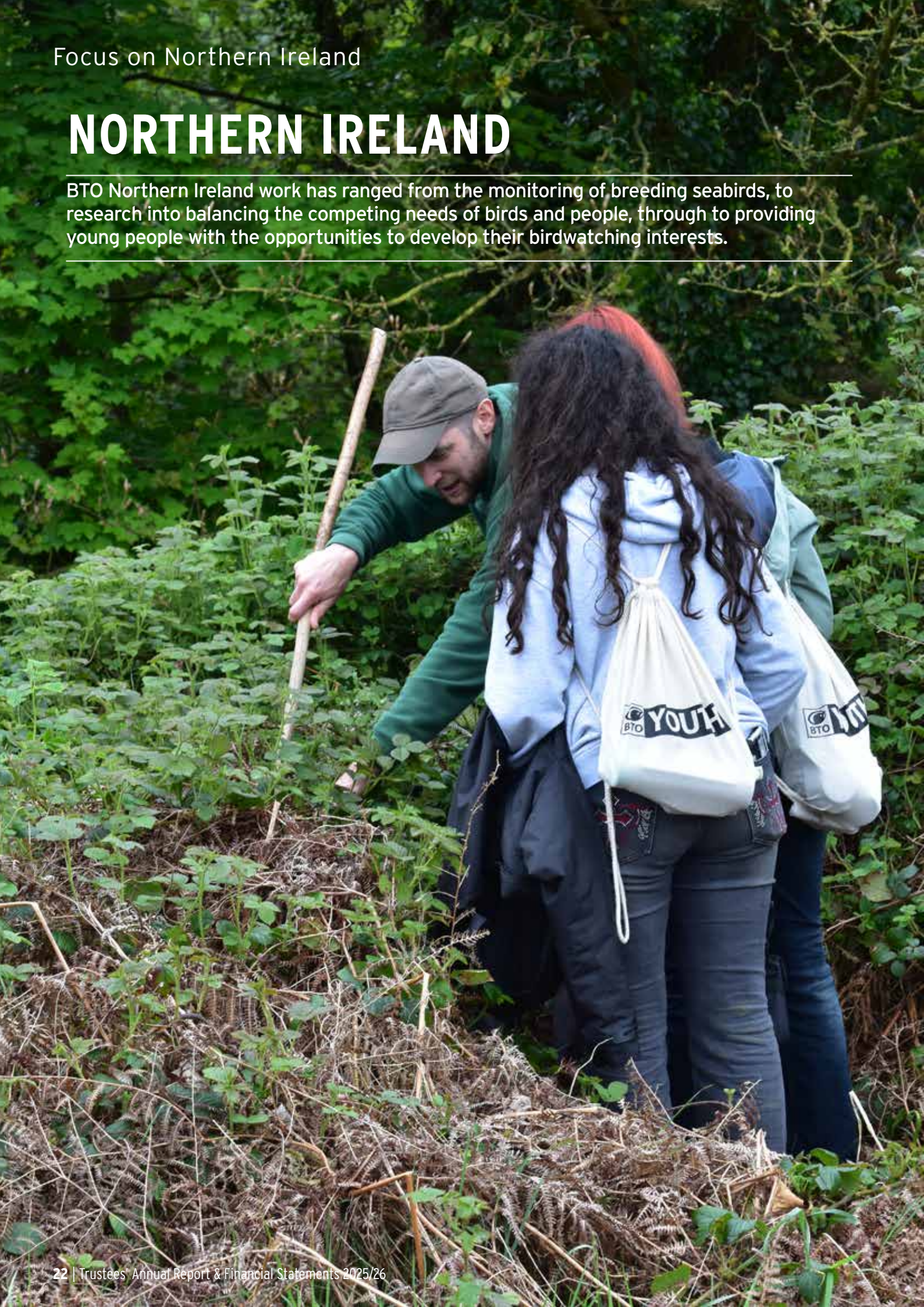


Herring Gulls, by Edmund Fellowes / BTO

Goosander, by David Tipling / birdphoto.co.uk

NORTHERN IRELAND

BTO Northern Ireland work has ranged from the monitoring of breeding seabirds, to research into balancing the competing needs of birds and people, through to providing young people with the opportunities to develop their birdwatching interests.



Future seabird populations

As part of a suite of work for the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA), funded through the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) Environment Fund, BTO was asked to investigate climate change-related impacts on seabird populations in and around Northern Ireland. BTO Northern Ireland staff assessed how different seabird populations might be affected by future predicted climate change. This work builds on previous BTO-led research, updating the approach used previously by bringing in updated oceanographic information and the most recent census data for seabirds.

The resulting analyses show that seabird populations in the region are predicted to decline in both presence and abundance by 2050 under the most realistic future climate change scenario; this scenario is equivalent to approximately 2°C global warming by 2050, compared to 1986–2005 levels. The work also highlights a number of seabird species for which a lack of available data means that we cannot examine possible climate change impacts, or indeed those caused by other factors. This makes BTO work on seabirds, both in Northern Ireland and elsewhere, all the more urgent.

A related piece of work, again funded by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency, explored the amount of evidence available on the movements and distributions of marine birds in and around Northern Ireland waters. The study identified a number of knowledge gaps and highlighted that further research, tracking a wider range of marine bird species, would deliver a better and much-needed understanding of Northern Ireland's marine birds. This understanding, and its associated evidence base, will support conservation action and inform policy.

Balancing competing needs

Northern Ireland's sea loughs are important for the wildlife that they support, and all five of them have protected areas designated to preserve the best of Northern Ireland's wildlife and geology. These include Special Protection Area and Ramsar Convention designations that recognise their importance to birds, wetland habitats and biodiversity.

The loughs are also important for aquaculture and sporting and leisure activities. Balancing the needs of these different uses requires an understanding of possible interactions between them. Human-related disturbance to foraging or resting waterbirds can cause birds to fly away to alternative areas or cause non-fleeing responses like increased vigilance, which may reduce feeding opportunities for the birds involved.

The results of a targeted field-based study, which directly assessed the potential responses of waterbirds to disturbance, were published during the year. BTO Northern Ireland staff focused on the disturbance associated with intertidal aquaculture activities and set this in the context of disturbance events caused by other activities.

Despite the average disturbance levels of non-aquaculture-related activities being much higher than that of aquaculture-related activities at most sites, the average disturbance caused by oyster-trestle workers and shellfish tractors were the two highest among all types of disturbance across all sites. The findings from the study help to inform the management of these different uses of the sites, delivering better outcomes for birds and people.



Scaup, by Paul Hillion / BTO

Growing confidence

Two different projects provide examples of work by BTO Northern Ireland staff to give people opportunities to grow their skills and confidence through participation in BTO activities. As noted in more detail on page 27, BTO Northern Ireland's Ripple Project has successfully delivered opportunities for more than 1,200 individuals to engage with nature.

The year saw delivery of another very successful Northern Ireland Bird Camp, with young people from across the country coming together for a weekend of nature-focused activities, led by BTO staff and BTO Youth volunteers. Demand for these Bird Camps is high, underlining significant interest within youth audiences and a lack of opportunities elsewhere. We are hugely grateful to the individuals and organisations that have helped to fund, facilitate and deliver the camps. It is very evident just how welcome the camps are.

Both of these projects are working to address the previously identified challenge of getting a greater proportion of Northern Ireland's population interested in the natural world and involved in taking action to secure its future (see page 10).

Searching for nests at Bird Camp / BTO Youth

BEING FIT FOR THE FUTURE

Our overarching strategic objectives are to increase the impact of our work and grow the number and diversity of people working with us. Over the past year we have continued work on priority projects within our six Action Areas.

Charting Change: We are tracking changes in bird populations to understand their health, and that of the wider natural world. A comprehensive review of gaps in our knowledge of species and their status was completed in autumn 2025 as part of our **Monitoring Strategy**. Consultations with partners have identified where ambitions and interests align, and work is now focused on costing options so we can secure funding to deliver these. Work on **Bird Atlas 2027–31** kicked off during the year. This ambitious project will provide complete and unrivalled information from every part of Britain and Ireland, telling us which birds are where and how they are doing in both winter and the breeding season. Work on our **Demographic Monitoring Strategy** was initiated, providing a framework to direct volunteer effort to better understand why bird populations are changing.

Delivering Data: We are working with partners and communities to ensure our data and science are doing the most that they can for birds and people. Two very visible examples of this can be seen in the publication of an **open access dataset** for the BTO/JNCC/RSPB Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) and the launch of **BirdFacts Places**. The latter, which is a companion resource to our popular BirdFacts Species pages, uses our incredible datasets to provide a clearer picture of the status of birds in each county. Although currently based largely on data from BirdTrack, BBS, Bird Atlas 2007–11 and the Wetland Bird Survey, data from other projects will be added.

Sustaining Supporters: We are ensuring that everyone who works with us feels valued, and knows they are playing an important role in tackling the biodiversity and climate crises. Delivery of a **relaunched website** is making our data and expertise more accessible, while work to upgrade our **supporter database** and its interface with our website was kicked off during the year. The latter will improve the supporter experience when interacting with BTO and the projects in which individuals participate. We have also explored opportunities to increase our supporter base, both through more accessible surveys (e.g. **Birds in Greenspaces**) and through the use of different communication channels.

Embracing Everyone: We are inspiring, engaging and empowering a greater diversity of people to discover and value nature. Over the year we began to roll out organisational processes and resources that enable and embed inclusion across BTO. One of these is our **Equality Impact Assessment tool**, which is being used by project managers to identify areas where a project might inadvertently create barriers to participation – such as the use of jargon, requirement for technical skills or overly complex design. We can then work to address these commonly identified barriers to make a project or piece of work more inclusive. If we are to become more inclusive then we need to measure any associated change in, for example, the **demographics of our supporter base**. During the year we continued or completed several pieces of work to capture baseline information that will enable us to measure the hoped-for change.

Seeking Solutions: We are using our science to find ways to better manage land, coasts and seas, meeting the needs of both birds and people. BTO research into finding solutions for **farmland bird declines** continues to be an important component of our work in this area. We have recently, for example, carried out in-depth monitoring and evaluation of land management scheme options. Work on **coastal habitats** has included research to understand the role of water quality changes in the declines in waterbird populations on the Lough Neagh and Lough Beg Special Protection Area in Northern Ireland, while that in the **marine environment** is continuing to deliver vital evidence to support policy and decision-making around offshore renewables and other marine infrastructure.

Framing Futures: We are using our science to track the impacts of, and inform responses to, future climate change and new environmental threats to birds. As detailed elsewhere in this report, our **avian disease** work is informing the response to avian influenza and shaping practical responses to finch trichomonosis. A significant and growing area, drawing on our expertise in passive **acoustic monitoring**, is around **habitat restoration**, where our expertise is making a difference both here in the UK and overseas.

Purple Heron, by David Tipling/birdphoto.co.uk



THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

We are very grateful to everyone who generously supports our work financially, whether via individual membership, a gift to an appeal or corporate support. We are particularly thankful to those who take the very special step of remembering BTO in their Will.

Legacies

Gifts in Wills surpassed our expectations this year, with £2.79 million received for the financial year. We've been humbled by the wonderful generosity of those supporters who gave a gift to the BTO in their Wills. With Bird Atlas 2027–31 on the horizon, this valuable income will continue to deliver significant impact for conservation and the birds that we all love.

Part of a generous legacy gift from Stephen Hart and a restricted legacy from Pamela Rhodes are being utilised to support the new atlas. Our Birds in Greenspaces project, funded by the Denis Summers-Smith legacy, continues to thrive due to the hard work of Jess Stokes and Daniel Johnson. Working with organisations like Sense, they were able to provide a sensory resource pack for disabled people to make the project even more inclusive.

A scientific paper by Jenni Border and colleagues, on the role of protected areas in the conservation of migratory bird species, was supported by a legacy from Michael Welch and published during the year. The paper, highlighting that Afro-Palearctic migratory bird species lack consistent protection during their time in Europe, has been incredibly well received.

BTO joined in partnership with Octopus Legacy, which enables us to provide a second free Wills choice (including online) for supporters. For more information about our free Wills offers please email **legacies@bto.org**.



Welsh Raptor Convention, by Phil Pickin / BTO

Witherby Custodians

The BTO Witherby Custodians are a special group of supporters who continue the remarkable impact of Harry Forbes Witherby, whose donation from the sale of his collection of bird skins helped establish BTO.

Over the past year, Witherby Custodians have helped fund a range of important BTO projects. In October, the group gathered at the Royal Society in London, where they were among the first to hear about BTO's exciting decision to undertake a new bird atlas, planned for 2027–2031. During the afternoon, members of the BTO Atlas team presented their plans, followed by lively discussions about BTO's ambitions and the challenges facing our birds.

We're immensely grateful to all our Witherby Custodians for their generosity and commitment. If you would like to learn more about becoming a Witherby Custodian, please contact David Agombar at david.agombar@bto.org.

Trusts and foundations

We made excellent progress towards improving monitoring of birds of prey in Wales through our Cudyll Cymru project, funded by the Nature Networks Programme (being delivered by the Heritage Fund, on behalf of the Welsh Government). During the year the project engaged 500 volunteers, 266 of whom contributed data from 399 survey areas within Wales and logged over 5,735 volunteer hours. In January 2026, we held our first ever Welsh raptor convention. This was a sellout event and received 100% positive feedback from attendees and guest speakers.

Our youth work continues to go from strength to strength and was boosted this year by further support from a generous foundation who wish to remain anonymous. Thanks to their support, we were able to deliver another hugely successful Youth In Nature Summit, this time in partnership with Green Jobs for Nature. Held over two days, this vibrant gathering brought together passionate young people from diverse backgrounds, united by a shared love for the natural world and a commitment to conservation.

We completed delivery of our Ripple NI Project funded by CRESI-NI, which sought to engage new people with nature in Northern Ireland. Between August 2022 and August 2025, we delivered 2,017 participant sessions for approximately 1,290 individuals. The project aimed to move from a staff-led to volunteer-led event model, transitioning over three years as volunteer confidence grew. The vast majority (91%) of participants had not engaged with BTO before attending a Ripple NI event, and of those, 30% went on to participate further in the project or BTO's other activities.

Corporate members

We are grateful to the businesses who help us deliver our charitable objectives through their subscription to our Corporate Membership Scheme. We are particularly grateful to our corporate sponsors Vine House Farm Ltd for their generous financial support. Vine House Farm sells a wide range of high-quality bird feeders and bird food, much of which is produced on their own conservation-award-winning farm. They're helping us by increasing awareness of our work amongst their customers, by supporting us financially and by hosting BTO events at their wonderful site in Lincolnshire. We thank Lucy Taylor and Nicholas Watts, Charlotte Yeung and the rest of the staff and customers of Vine House Farm for supporting BTO.

Spotted Flycatcher, by David Tipling / BTO

OUR SUPPORTERS

Each year we need to raise millions of pounds to fund our work so that we can deliver the charitable outcomes for birds that are so important to our supporters. We are grateful for the wonderful financial support we receive from our members, donors, funders, partners, corporate members and customers.

Corporate supporters 2025/26

BiOME Consulting Ltd, Boston Seeds, CJ WildBird Foods Limited, Cuckoo Broadband, Eddowes Aviation Safety Limited, Harvest Pet Products Ltd, Northumbrian Water Limited, Nurture Landscapes Group, Opticron, Outdoor Alternative Ltd, P & R Seeds, Samuel McCausland Ltd t/a The Grass People, Swallowtail Print, Vine House Farm.

Charitable trusts 2025/26

Cameron Bespolka Trust, Downton Banister Trust, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, Harris Charitable Trust, Marsh Charitable Trust, Peter Smith Charitable Trust for Nature, Primrose Hill Trust Fund, Raptor Aid, Temple Tree Foundation, The Brocklebank Charitable Trust, The Gilander Foundation, The Lizandy Charitable Trust, The Penchant Foundation, The Tobit Trust, The Valerie White Memorial Fund, The Whaites Charitable Fund, Woodpeckers Trust.

Legacies 2025/26

Mr John H M Ashworth, Mrs Sharon Ball, Mrs Margaret A Bousfield, Mrs Mavis A Boutle, Mr Derek Bradbury, Miss Pauline Brooking, Mr James Camp, Mr Gordon R Caw, Mr Christopher Chappell, Lorraine G Clarke, Mr Brian Crawford, Mrs Moira Duncan, Annette J Evans, Mr William J Farley-Hills, Mrs Patricia A Felix, Mr Robert W H Fletcher, Mr Robin J Forrest, Mr Brian R Glover, Mrs Diana M Hall, Mr Stephen Hart, Mrs Margaret W Hasdell, Mr Stephen R Hatch, Mrs Jennifer M Hexter, Ann M Hinkley, Christine G Hogg, Mr Wyn T Hughes, Dr Linda Maddock, Anne P Marsden, Joan Owen, Suzanne Parrott, Mr Robin T Pepper, Mrs Dorothy Percival, Miss Janet M Pilbeam, Mrs Margaret A Powell, Diana M Ross, Mrs Anastasia Russell, Miss Muriel Shaw, Mr Nicholas J Shirley, Helen S D Stokes, Mr Gordon M Strutt, Mr James Denis Summers-Smith, Prudence E Tapply, Mr Alan Tompsett, Betty W Walker, Michael F Wildish, Mrs Barbara J Williams.

In memoriam 2025/26

J C Allsop, Eileen Joyce Bain, Tim Ball, Barbara Crank, Rosemary Crawford, Martin Downey, Margaret Fieldhouse, Dr Jim Flegg, David Gasson, Clare Louise Halliday, Spencer Raymond Hirons, Michael Holdsworth, Elaine Holland, Lawrence Holloway, Jean Hopwood, Joe Horwood, Freda Jackson, David Maxwell Jones, Julie Knight, Elsie Laird, Tony Lewis, Antony John Eliot Lloyd, Jonathan Martin, Stephen Roy Mitchell, David Percy Molloy, Geoff Pearce, Ted Percy, Barbara Pulsford, Bill Quantrill, Prudence Quayle, Lyn Rolt, Peter Robin Saunders, Dick Shoesmith, Diane Stamp, Andrew Stratford, Prudence Tapply, Jill Constance Taylor, Bernard Leslie James Webb, Michael Richard White, Geraldine Wickson.

Organisational funders of BTO Work 2025/26

AMUNET Wind Power Company S.A.E, Animal and Plant Health Agency, Bangor University, BBSRC, Bookend Trust - Tasmania, Boparan Ltd, BSG Ecology, Cairngorms National Park Authority, Cambridge Conservation Initiative, Carbon Trust, Chilterns Conservation Board, DAERA, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, Department for Communities Northern Ireland, Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Devon Wildlife Trust, Duchy of Cornwall, Essex Birdwatching Society, EURING, Forestry England, Forestry & Land Scotland, Frankfurt Zoological Society, Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust, Hampshire Ornithological Society, Hartley Anderson Ltd., Horizon Europe, ICF Consulting Services, Innovate UK, Institute of Avian Research, Island Solutions, J&JR Wilson Trust, Joint Nature Conservation Committee (on behalf of the statutory nature conservation agencies: Natural England, Natural Resources Wales, NatureScot and the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs), Lignacite, Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle, The National Lottery Heritage Fund, National Trust, Natural England, Natural Resources Wales, Natural Environment Research Council, NatureScot, North Wales Wildlife Trust, Northumbrian Water Limited, North York Moors National Park Authority, Northern Ireland Environment Agency, Ørsted, PEACEPLUS, a programme managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB), Rewilding Britain, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Sanger, Scottish Government, SOVON, States of Guernsey, Suffolk Wildlife Trust, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology, UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), University of Bristol, University of Cambridge, University of East Anglia, University of Exeter, University of Torino, Vattenfall, Warwick Council, Welsh Government, WSP UK Ltd, Xenolith Ltd, Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority, Zoological Society of London.

Individual and group funders 2025/26

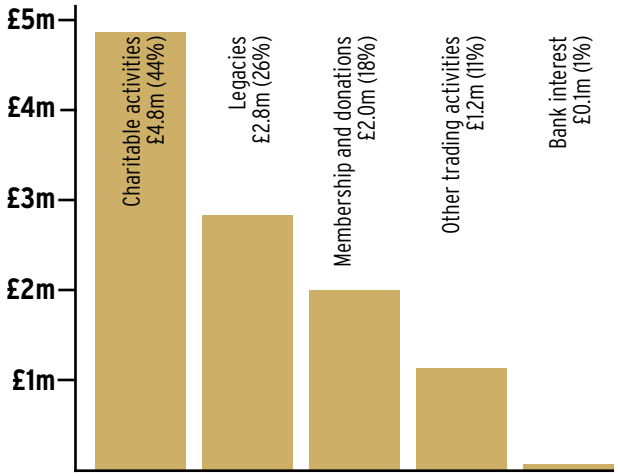
John Allen, Mike Archer, William Barnes, Nigel & Jacquie Clark, Mark Constantine, Simon Cooke, William Dick, Ian Duncan, Marion Faulds, Ian Gamble, Andrew Henderson, David Hodgson, Sue Holdsworth, Diana Housley, Devinder Kapur, Jenny Kingsland, Richard Langley, Helen Lumley, John Neighbour, Peter Oakley, Jon Pavey, Severn Estuary Gull Group, Ken & Linda Smith, Clifford Smout, Franziska Vogel, Justin & Gillian Wills, Michael Wilson, Michael Wortley.

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

A record year for income

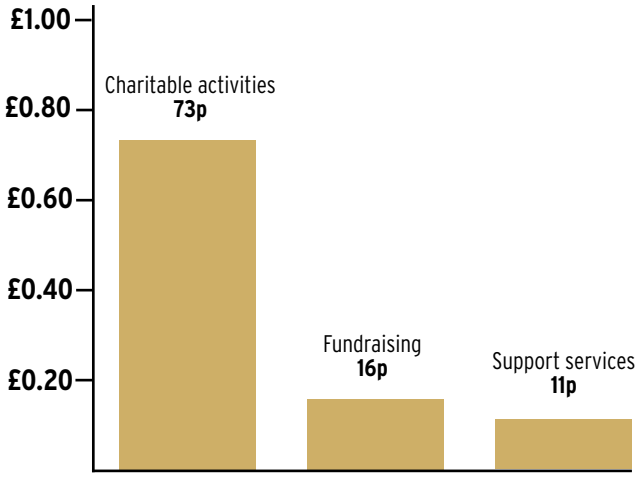
Total income increased by £2.2 million compared with 2024/25, driven by a record year for gifts in Wills. Legacies generated £2.8 million, and we are deeply grateful to everyone who has chosen to support BTO in this way. Voluntary income accounted for 44% of total income (2024/25: 32%), moving us closer to our long-term goal of generating more than half of our income from supporters and donors. Income from contract work also grew strongly, increasing by 4% to £4.8 million, reflecting continued demand for the Trust's scientific expertise and data.

Where our income came from



Contract income remained our largest source of funding at £4.8 million, while legacy income reached a record £2.8 million.

How every £1 received was spent



73p in every £1 received was spent on charitable activities, a slight increase from 72p in 2024/25. Support services include finance, governance, human resources, IT and facilities that enable BTO to deliver its charitable work.

Investing in ornithological research

During the year, the Trust invested £7.3 million delivering, supporting and communicating ornithological research, compared with £6.2 million in 2024/25.

Maintaining financial resilience

The Board's reserves policy aims to hold free reserves equivalent to between three and four months of operating costs. At 31 March 2026, free reserves stood at £3.2 million, equivalent to 4.7 months' operating expenditure (2025: 4.4 months). The increase in free reserves reflects the Board's commitment to maintaining the Trust's financial resilience. This is particularly important given the unpredictable nature of legacy income, allowing the Trust to continue delivering its charitable objectives through periods when income is lower than expected.

Pension scheme

The defined benefit pension scheme moved from a deficit of £180,000 to a surplus of £269,000 during the year due to changes in financial market conditions. The surplus has not been recognised as an asset because the Trust cannot currently access or benefit from it. Nor does it reduce the deficit recovery contributions the Trust is required to make, which will remain unchanged until the next triennial actuarial valuation.

Overall, the BTO remains in a strong financial position, with healthy reserves, growing voluntary income and continued investment in its scientific work for birds and for people.

Our publications: 2025

Our staff and PhD students produced 75 papers that were first published in 2025, of which 67 were in ISI-listed journals and 27 were published in high-impact publications (with an impact factor of 3.5 or greater). 35 of the publications were BTO-led, and 67 were in collaborative in nature, underlining the strong partnership approach to our work.

Ashton-Butt, A., **Newson, S.E.**, Doser, J., **Gillings, S.**, ..., **Pearce-Higgins, J.** & **Atkinson, P.W.** 2025. Acoustic monitoring enables multi-taxa conservation assessment and prioritisation over large scales and for rare and cryptic species. *Global Ecology & Biogeography* **34**: e70175. doi.org/10.1111/geb.70175

Atkinson, P.W., **Balmer, D.E.**, ..., **Frost, T.M.**, **Humphreys, E.M.**, ..., **Langlois Lopez, S.**, ..., **Pearce-Higgins, J.W.**, *et al.* 2025. Evaluating the use of carcass and testing data to assess the high pathogenicity avian influenza (HPAI) related mortality in wild birds in the United Kingdom and Crown Dependencies between 2021–2023. *Bird Study* **72**: 20–38. doi.org/10.1080/00063657.2025.2492902

Atkinson, P.W. & **Baillie, S.R.** 2025. Responding to high pathogenicity avian influenza (HPAI) and the conservation crisis in wild birds – where next? *Bird Study* **72**: 1–4. doi.org/10.1080/00063657.2025.2509991

Atkinson, P.W. & **Baillie, S.R.** 2025. Jumping species and seasons – the spread and impact of highly pathogenic avian influenza on seabirds and waterbirds. *Bird Study* **71**: 289–292. doi.org/10.1080/00063657.2025.2471626

Barnes, A.E., ... & **Robinson, R.A.** 2025. Not just species recording: the potential of citizen science for habitat monitoring. *Landscape Ecology* **40**: 181. doi.org/10.1007/s10980-025-02155-4

Barton, M.G., **Conway, G.J.**, **Henderson, I.G.**, ..., **Noyes, P.**, *et al.* 2025. Meta-analysis of predator identity in nest-camera studies in the British Islands. *Ibis* **168**: 42–62. doi.org/10.1111/ibi.13436

Bennett, S. & Weston, E. 2025. Growth of seaweed species on GLS logger attachments. *Seabird* **37**: doi.org/10.61350/sbj.37.3

Bennett, S., Phillips, R.A. & Green, J.A. 2025. Quantifying the effect of time on geolocations accuracy in seabirds. *Marine Ornithology* **53**: 331–335. doi.org/10.5038/2074-1235.53.2.1654

Bennett, S., *et al.* 2025. Bioacoustics as a measure of population size and breeding success of European Storm Petrels *Hydrobates pelagicus*. *Ecology & Evolution* **15**: e71893. doi.org/10.1002/ece3.71893

Border, J.A., **Pearce-Higgins, J.W.**, **Hewson, C.**, ... & **Baillie, S.R.** 2025. Expanding protected area coverage for migratory birds could improve long-term population trends. *Nature Communications* **16**: 1813. doi.org/10.1038/s41467-025-57019-x

Border, J.A., **Robinson, R.A.**, **Pearce-Higgins, J.W.**, **Hewson, C.M.**, ... & **Baillie, S.R.** 2025. Temporal changes to migratory fuel-load in migratory birds across Europe. *Global Change Biology* **31**: e70570. doi.org/10.1111/gcb.70570

Bourhis, Y., ..., **Beckman, B.**, *et al.* 2025. Trait mediation explains decadal distributional shifts for a wide range of insect taxa. *Nature Communications* **16**: e8131. doi.org/10.1038/s41467-025-63093-y

Broughton, R.K., ..., **Fuller, R.J.**, *et al.* 2025. The Białowieża Forest as an example of the resilience of long-term studies in a changing world. *Biological Conservation* **304**: 111045. doi.org/10.1016/j.biocon.2025.111045

Bruce, R.C., Abbott, A.J., ..., **Hanmer, H.J.**, **Robinson, R.A.**, *et al.*2025. Detection of West Nile virus via retrospective mosquito arbovirus surveillance, United Kingdom, 2025. *Eurosurveillance* **30**. doi.org/10.2807/1560-7917.ES.2025.30.28.2500401

Bryant, J.V., Mallord, J.W., ..., **Vickery, J.A.** & Burgess, M.D. 2025. Non-breeding home range and habitat use by European Pied Flycatcher (*Ficedula hypoleuca*) in northwest Liberia: apparent resilience to forest degradation? *Ibis* **167**: 498–514. doi.org/10.1111/ibi.13378

Buckingham, L., Bogdanova, M.I., Daunt, F., Furness, R.W., **Bennett, S.**, *et al.* 2025. An improved method to derive behavioural budgets and energetics from geolocator data in Common Guillemots *Uria aalge*. *Seabird* **37**. doi.org/10.61350/sbj.37.6

Burns, F., Mordue, S., Al-Fulaij, N., **Boersch-Supan, P.**, *et al.* 2025. State of nature 2023 terrestrial and freshwater animal dataset for the United Kingdom and its constituent countries. *Data in Brief* **60**: 111646. doi.org/10.1016/j.dib.2025.111646

Cano-Povedano, J., López-Calderón, C., ..., **Thaxter, C.B.**, *et al.* 2025. Spatiotemporal differences in plastic biovectoring among three sympatric waterbirds. *Environmental Research* **285**: 122477. doi.org/10.1016/j.envres.2025.122477

Caulfield, E., **Woodward, I.**, Peck, K., Wotton, S. & **Frost, T.** 2025. Overwinter population estimates of waterbirds in Great Britain. *British Birds* **118**: 642–657.

Clairbaux, M., Darby, J.H., **Caulfield, E.** & Jessopp, M.J. 2025. Acute impacts of biologging devices on the diving behaviour of Manx shearwaters. *Animal Biotelemetry* **13**: 5. doi.org/10.1186/s40317-025-00399-0

Clarke, J.A., **Smith, J.A.**, **Leach, E.**, **Boersch-Supan, P.H.** & **Robinson, R.A.** 2025. How many eggs are too many? Utilizing an under-dispersed count data model to gain insights into evolutionary productivity constraints on bird species. *Environmetrics* **36**: e70032. doi.org/10.1002/env.70032

Cook, A.S.C.P., Masden, E.A., **Humphreys, E.M.** & **Pearce-Higgins, J.W.** 2025. Cumulative barriers to renewable energy development: can we adjust our perspective and approach to benefit biodiversity? *Ecological Solutions and Evidence* **6**: e70010. doi.org/10.1002/2688-8319.70010

Cook, A.S.C.P., Salkanovic, E., Masden, E., Lee, H.E. & Kiilerich, A.H. 2025. A critical appraisal of 40 years of avian collision risk modelling: how have we got here and where do we go next? *Environmental Impact Assessment Review* **110**: 107717. doi.org/10.1016/j.eiar.2024.107717

Couet, J., Marjakangas, E.-L., ..., **Massimino, D.**, *et al.* 2025. Solar radiation affects bird distributions but not elevational shifts in European mountains. *Global Ecology and Biogeography* **34**: e70143. doi.org/10.1111/geb.70143

Cuchot, P., Bonnet, T., **Robinson, R.A.**, Arizaga, J., *et al.* 2025. Phenological plasticity and its temperature-related drivers in common songbirds across Europe. *Global Change Biology* **31**: e70600. doi.org/10.1111/gcb.70600

Davies, J., Gallego-Zamorano, J., Reinartz, R., **Robinson, R.**, **Baillie, S.**, *et al.* 2025. Exploration of weather and tracking data for the wild bird abundance and movement models of the early warning system for avian influenza in the EU. *EFSA Supporting Publications* **22**: 9423E. doi.org/10.2903/sp.efsa.2025.EN-9423

Day, G.W., Bolderstone, T., **Conway, G.**, Cross, T., Davis, T., *et al.* 2025. The genomic signature of demographic decline in a long-distance migrant in a range extreme population. *Molecular Ecology* **34**: e17805.doi.org/10.1111/mec.17805

Eden, C.F., Broughton, R.K., Donato, B., **Hewson, C.M.**, Isaksson, C. & Sharp, S.P. 2025. Cross-system transfer of fatty acids from aquatic insects supports terrestrial insectivore condition and reproductive success. *Oecologia* **207**: 191. doi.org/10.1007/s00442-025-05827-9

Ewing, H., **Bowgen, K.M.**, **Burton, N.H.K.**, Saunders, R., Perkins, A., ... & **Franks, S.E.** 2025. A review of Curlew headstarting projects in Europe. *Wader Study* **132**. doi.org/10.18194/ws.00373

Fletcher Jr, R.J., Green, R.E., Bladon, E.K., **Atkinson, P.W.**, *et al.* 2025. Beyond species richness for biological conservation. *Conservation Letters* **18**: e13124. doi.org/10.1111/conl.13124

Frederiksen, M., Layton-Matthews, K., **Bennett, S.**, ..., **Hereward, H.F.R.**, **Johnston, D.T.**, ... & **Humphreys, E.M.** 2025. Opportunities and challenges for new technologies in seabird population monitoring. *ICES Journal of Marine Science* **82**: fsaf115. doi.org/10.1093/icesjms/fsaf115

Gomez, S., English, H.M., Alegre, V.B., Blackwell, P.G., ..., **Russell, C.J.G.**, *et al.* 2025. Understanding and predicting animal movements and distributions in the Anthropocene. *Journal of Animal Ecology* **96**: 1,146–1,164. doi.org/10.1111/1365-2656.70040

Gómez-Catasús, J., Benítez-López, A., Díaz, M., del Portillo, D.G., ..., **Pearce-Higgins, J.W.**, *et al.* 2025. Alarming conservation status of Western European steppe birds and their habitats: an expert-based review of current threats, traits and knowledge gaps. *Biological Conservation* **311**: 111414. doi.org/10.1016/j.biocon.2025.111414

Gould, E., Fraser, H.S., Parker, T.H. ..., **Smith, J.**, *et al.* 2025. Same data, different analysts: variation in effect sizes due to analytical decisions in ecology and evolutionary biology. *BMC Biology* **23**: 35. doi.org/10.1186/s12915-024-02101-x

Green, R.E., Taggart, M.A., Pain, D.J., **Clark, N.A.**, ..., **Robinson, R.A.**, *et al.* 2025. The proportion of common pheasants shot using lead shotgun ammunition in Britain has barely changed over five years of voluntary efforts to switch from lead to non-lead ammunition. *Conservation Evidence* **22**: 18–25. doi.org/10.52201/CEJ22/EXYS6184

Green, R.M.W., **Cook, A.S.C.P.**, **Burton, N.H.K.**, **Franks, S.E.** & Green, J.A. 2025. Framework for

assessing species vulnerability to spatially explicit anthropogenic pressures whilst on migration. *Biological Conservation* **307**: 111118. doi.org/10.1016/j.biocon.2025.111118

Hawkes, R.W., Mason, L.R., **Conway, G.J.**, **Siriwardena, G.M.**, *et al.* 2025. Landscape context influences efficacy of protected areas and agri-environment scheme delivery for waders breeding in lowland wet grassland. *Journal of Applied Ecology* **62**: 1,114–1,126. doi.org/10.1111/1365-2664.70039

Henderson, I., **Barton, M.**, ... & **Conway, G.J.** 2025. Post-fledging movements in an elusive raptor, the Eurasian Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*: scale of dispersal, foraging range and habitat interactions in lowland England. *Ibis* **167**: 660–678. doi.org/10.1111/ibi.13403

Hordley, L.A., ..., **Gillings, S.**, *et al*. 2025. Disentangling how climate and dispersal drive temporal trends in synchronous population dynamics. *Ecology & Evolution* **15**: e71443. doi.org/10.1002/ece3.71443

Jarrett, D., Barnett, R., Bradfer-Lawrence, T., *et al.* 2025. Mitigating bias in long-term terrestrial ecoacoustic studies. *Journal of Applied Ecology* **62**: 761–772. doi.org/10.1111/1365-2664.70000

Jarvis, S., ..., **Siriwardena, G.**, Phillips, S. & Staley, J.T. 2025. Positive impacts of agri-environment schemes on butterflies from multiple evidence sources. *Journal of Applied Ecology* **62**: 2,226–2,236. https://doi.org/10.1111/1365-2664.70126

Johnston, D.T., **Atkinson, P.W.**, **Leech, E.I.**, **Burton, N.H.K.**, **Humphreys, E.M.**, **Robinson, R.A.**, Blackburn, J.R., ..., **Davies, J.C.**, ... & **Pearce-Higgins, J.W.** 2025. Using ring (band) recovery data to examine the impact of high pathogenicity avian influenza (HPAI) on wild bird populations. *Bird Study* **72**: 39–50. doi.org/10.1080/00063657.2025.2491797

Johnston, D.T., **Humphreys, E.M.**, **Davies, J.G.**, Evans, T., Howells, R.J. & **Pearce-Higgins, J.W.** 2025. Current understanding of how climate change affects seabirds varies between regions and species in the North-East Atlantic. *Marine Ecology Progress Series* **755**: 163–177. doi.org/10.3354/meps14785

Johnston, D.T., Masden, E.A., Booth Jones, K.A. & **Humphreys, E.M.** 2025. Combining temperature-depth recorder and GPS data improves identification of foraging habitat in diving seabirds. Marine Biology **172**: e172. doi.org/10.1007/s00227-025-04742-0

Kirkland, M., Annorbah, N.N.D., **Barber, L.**, ..., **Fuller, R.J.**, **Atkinson, P.W.** & **Hewson, C.M.** 2025. Extreme migratory connectivity and mirroring of non-breeding grounds conditions in a severely declining breeding population of an Afro-Palearctic migratory bird. *Scientific Reports* **15**: 3307. doi.org/10.1038/s41598-025-86484-z

Kloepper, L.N., Tuninetti, A., Bentley, I., Harding, C.D., **Brighton, C.H.**, *et al.* 2025. Stereotyped active sensing in fast-diving echolocating bats. *iScience* **28**: 12. doi.org/10.1016/j.isci.2025.114099

Koffijberg, K., Prior, N., ..., **Calbrade, N.**, *et al.* 2025. Decline of the Bewick's Swan *Cygnus columbianus bewickii* population wintering in Northeast/Northwest Europe. *Wildfowl* **75**: 63–93.

Lathouwers, M., Beenaerts, N., Evens, R., Artois, T. T., **Conway, G.**, **Henderson, I.**, *et al*. 2025. Impact of future climate change and land-use change on habitat suitability for a long-distance avian migrant under diverse socioeconomic-emission scenarios. *Global Ecology & Conservation* **62**: e03777. doi.org/10.1016/j.gecco.2025.e03777

Merondun, J., ..., **Hewson, C.**, *et al*. 2025. Genomic architecture of egg mimicry and its consequences for speciation in parasitic cuckoos. Science **390**: 527–532. doi.org/10.1126/science.adt9355

Morrison, C.A., Gill, J.A., Buchan, C., **Robinson, R.A.**, *et al.* 2025. How do synchrony in survival and productivity influence abundance synchrony in European landbirds? *Ecology Letters* **28**: e70105. doi.org/10.1111/ele.70105

Nousiainen, I., Bosco, L., Lehikoinen, P., **Robinson, R.**, *et al*. 2025. Adult survival has a stronger role than productivity in the annual population change of European songbirds. *Oecologia* **207**: 173. doi.org/10.1007/s00442-025-05810-4

O'Hanlon, N.J., Clewley, G.D., **Johnston, D.T.**, **Thaxter, C.B.**, **Langlois Lopez, S.**, Quinn, L.R., **Boersch-Supan, P.H.**, ..., **Burton, N.H.K.** & **Humphreys, E.M.** 2025. Partial niche partitioning in three sympatric gull species through foraging areas and habitat selection. *Ecology & Evolution* **15**: e71577. doi.org/10.1002/ece3.71577

O'Hanlon, N.J., ..., **Humphreys, E.M.** & Morrissey, B.J. 2025. Diet analysis of Kittiwake and Shag using DNA metabarcoding of faeces. *Seabird* **37**. doi.org/10.61350/sbj.37.5

Ockendon, N., ..., **Noble, D.**, Shaw, T. & Thomas, D. 2025. A framework for monitoring ecosystem restoration at landscape scale. *Conservation Science & Practice* **8**: e70214. doi.org/10.1111/csp2.70214

Patchett, R., **Thaxter, C.B.**, **Burton, N.H.K.**, ..., **Green, R.M.W.**, **Humphreys, E.M.**, **Johnston, D.T.**, ..., **O'Hanlon, N.J.**, *et al.* 2025. Habitat selection of three gull species in response to sudden changes in human mobility. *Proc. Royal Soc. (B)* **292**: 20252482. doi.org/10.1098/rspb.2025.2482

Pearce-Higgins, J.W. 2025. Rewilding in a changing climate – risks and opportunities. *British Wildlife* **36**.

Pearce-Higgins, J.W. & Pollock, C.J. 2025. Using expert elicitation to assess the likely effectiveness of conservation interventions during an unprecedented outbreak of high pathogenicity avian influenza (HPAI) in wild birds. *Bird Study* **72**: 74–88. doi.org/10.1080/00063657.2025.2491799

Pearce-Higgins, J.W., ... & **Atkinson, P.W.** 2025. Assessing the vulnerability of wild bird populations to high pathogenicity avian influenza. *Bird Study* **72**: 5–19. doi.org/10.1080/00063657.2025.2494164

Petrusková, T., ..., **Burton, N.H.K.** & Petrusek, A. 2025. Fast trills in songs of a small passerine are not reliable signals of individuals' age or predictors of mating success. *Animal Behaviour* **230**: 123354. doi.org/10.1016/j.anbehav.2025.123354

Pigot, A.L., Dee, L., ..., **Massimino, D.**, *et al.* 2025. Macroecological rules predict how biomass scales with species richness in nature. *Science* **387**: 1,272–1,276. doi.org/10.1126/science.adq3278

Requena, S., Lormée, H., ..., **Vickery, J.A.** & Mallord, J.W. 2025. Riparian forests and open landscapes in the West African Sahel are key wintering habitats for the threatened European Turtle Dove (*Streptopelia turtur*). *Ibis* **167**: 895–911. doi.org/10.1111/ibi.13416

Skinner, A.A., ..., **Conway, G.J.**, ..., **Henderson, I.G.**, *et al.* 2025. Environmental pressures on the breeding grounds drive Bergmannian clines in nightjars. *Journal of Biogeography* **52**: 15176. doi.org/10.1111/jbi.15176

Smith, G.D., McGrady, M.J., **Beckmann, B.C**. & Oli, M.K. 2025. Potential effects of HPAI on occupancy rates, breeding success, age and turnover of breeding Peregrine Falcons *Falco peregrinus* in southern Scotland. *Bird Study* **72**: 69–73. doi.org/10.1080/00063657.2024.2396564

Smith, K., Smith, L., ..., **Gillings, S.**, *et al.* 2025. Bioacoustics as a tool for the detection and monitoring of a scarce woodland bird – the Lesser Spotted Woodpecker. *British Birds* **118**: 658–667.

Sutherland, W.J., Brotherton, P.N., ..., **Pearce-Higgins, J.W.**, *et al.* 2025. A horizon scan of biological conservation issues for 2025. *Trends in Ecology & Evolution* **40**: 80–89. doi.org/10.1016/j.tree.2024.11.002

Swann, R.L & **Beckmann, B.C.** 2025. Significant decline of a Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo* population during an outbreak of high pathogenicity avian influenza (HPAI). *Bird Study* **72**: 61–68. doi.org/10.1080/00063657.2025.2489014

Taylor, P., ..., **Siriwardena, G.**, *et al.* 2025. Understanding the hydrological and landscape connectivity of lakes. *Landscape Ecology* **40**: 140. doi.org/10.1007/s10980-025-02153-6

Thaxter, C.B., ..., **Frost, T.**, **Calbrade, N.**, ..., **Burton, N.H.K.**, **Pearce-Higgins, J.W.** & Stroud, D.A. 2025. The use of monitoring data from north-west Europe as indicators for the health of Arctic-breeding waterbird populations. *Bird Conservation International* **35**: e24. doi.org/10.1017/S0959270925100063

Thaxter, C.B., Quinn, L., Atkinson, P., Booth Jones, K.A., **Clark, N.A.**, Clewley, G.D., **Green, R.M.W.**, **O'Hanlon, N.J.**, **Johnston, D.T.**, Masden, E.A., **Ross-Smith, V.H.**, Sage, E., Scragg, E., **Taylor, R.**, **Burton, N.H.K.** & **Humpreys, E.M.** 2025. Breeding and foraging habitat are important in determining foraging ranges of sympatric generalist species. *Ibis* **168**: 259–292. doi.org/10.1111/ibi.13446

Weiser, E.L., Lanctot, R.B., ..., **Bowgen, K.**, ..., **Burton, N.H.K.**, ..., **Clark, N.A.**, ..., **Ewing, H.T.**, ..., **Franks, S.E.**, ..., **Green, R.M.W.**, ..., **Taylor, R.C.**, *et al*. 2025. Power source, data retrieval method, and attachment type affect success of dorsally mounted tracking tag deployments in 37 species of shorebirds. *Journal of Avian Biology* e03487. https://doi.org/10.1002/jav.03487

Wetherhill, A., ..., **Humphreys, E.M.**, ..., **Wilson, M.J.** & **Calladine, J.** 2025. Tracking of Goosander *Mergus merganser* in Scotland. *Bird Study* **72**: 359–370. doi.org/10.1080/00063657.2025.2513544

Wetherhill, A.S., *et al.* 2025. Description of the downy chicks of the Long-tailed Nightjar *Caprimulgus climacurus*. *Malimbus* **7**: 33–36.

Wilkie, C., Law, A., ..., **Siriwardena, G.**, *et al*. 2025. Landscape-scale responses of freshwater biodiversity to connectivity and stressors. *Global Ecology & Biogeography* **34**: e70069. doi.org/10.1111/geb.70069

Wilson, M.W., **Beckmann, B.C**. & **Wernham, C.V.** 2025. Reduced breeding success consistent with effects of high pathogenicity avian influenza (HPAI) on raptors in Scotland in 2022. *Bird Study* **72**: 51–60. doi.org/10.1080/00063657.2025.2489015

Zalewska, K. ..., **Atkinson, P.W.**, *et al*. 2025. European breeding bird declines associated with narrower climatic niches. *Journal of Biogeography* **52**: e15127. doi.org/10.1111/jbi.15127

Board of Trustees and Management

Patron	HRH The Prince of Wales	
President	F R Gardner OBE TD VR FRGS	
Board of Trustees		
Chair	Prof Z G Davies	*2023-26*
Honorary Treasurer	J E Miller FCCA	*2023-26*
Chair of Finance & Risk Committee	I Coucher	*2022-26*
Chair of Governance, Safeguarding & Inclusion Committee	Dr G Ludhra	*2025-28*
Chair of Regional Network Committee	S Metcalf	*2025-28*
Chair of Ringing Committee	Dr J Dunning	*2026-29*
Chair of Business Development Committee	S J Marquis	*2020-27*
Ordinary Board Members	D Buscall	*2024-27*
	E Dresser	*2023-26*
	Dr R Thomas	*2026-29*
	E Thornton	*2023-26*
	Prof S Willis	*2024-27*
	J M Ziff	*2023-26*
Vice Presidents	Dr F Barclay	*2022-30*
	Prof S Bearhop	*2019-26*
	D C Jardine	*2020-27*

Finance & Risk Committee
Chair I Coucher; J E Miller; J M Ziff; Dr R Thomas

Governance, Safeguarding & Inclusion Committee
Chair Dr G Ludhra; E Dresser; E Thornton.

Regional Network Committee
Chair S Metcalf; A Alam; G Batho; G Bigg; H Crabtree; B Hillier; Dr S Murphy; E Thornton; J Wilson.

Ringing Committee
Chair Dr J Dunning; Prof S Willis; H Franklin; O Gabb; P Kirmond; L Hatton; J Lennon; S Vickers; C Twitchen; *Representatives*: H James; E Smart.

Business Development Committee
Chair S J Marquis; Dr F Barclay; D Buscall; I Coucher; J E Miller FCCA

Senior Leadership Team
Chief Executive Officer Prof J Vickery;
Director of Science Prof J W Pearce-Higgins; *Director of Engagement* Dr D I P Evans; *Director of Finance & Governance, Company Secretary* S D Bradfield ACA; *Director of Information Services* G N Hatt; *Director Country Offices* Dr C V Wernham; *Director Head of People and Organisational Development* S Knott.

Past Presidents and Chairs

Presidents		*Chairs*	
1958-60	R C Homes	1933-39	The Right Hon. Lord Scone MP, 7th Earl of Mansfield and Mansfield
1961-64	C A Norris	1940-41	The Right Hon. Malcolm MacDonald MP
1965-68	R C Homes	1942-47	Dr A Landsborough Thomson CB OBE DSc
1969-72	I J Ferguson-Lees	1948	Dr E M Nicholson CB CVO
1973-76	R A O Hickling	1949	A W Boyd MC
1977-80	J M McMeeking MBE	1950	Sir Norman Kinnear
1981-84	S M Taylor	1951-56	Major-General H P W Houston
1985-89	J A Hancock OBE	1957	R C Homes
1990-93	R P Howard	1958-87	No Chair
1994-96	Sir William Wilkinson	1988-91	G H Green
1997-2001	Sir Frederick Holliday	1992-96	I C Castle
2002-05	Lord Blakenham	1996-2000	Dr H P Sitters
2006-13	Baroness Young of Old Scone	2001-04	A J Martin
2014-18	C G Packham	2005-08	Dr S Hunter
2019-	F R Gardner OBE TD VR FRGS	2009-13	Prof I Newton FRS OBE
		2014-16	Prof A D Fox
		2016-22	Prof J A Gill
		2023-	Prof Z G Davies

For the purposes of Section 162 of the Charities Act 2011 and the Trustees' Report for the purposes of Section 415 of the Companies Act 2006.

Objectives and Activities

Charitable Objects

The objects of the Trust, as set out in its Memorandum of Association are, for the benefit of the nation:

(i) To promote, organise, carry on and encourage study and research and particularly field work for the advancement of knowledge in all branches of the Science of Ornithology.

(ii) Permanently to preserve and protect lands and objects which by their natural features are suitable for the preservation and study of bird life and of fauna and flora generally.

Public Benefit

The trustees have complied with the duty in Section 17 of the Charities Act 2011 to have due regard to public benefit guidance published by the Charity Commission. The following paragraphs set out in detail the aims, activities and performance of the Trust, and the way in which they provide public benefit.

Objectives and Activities

The BTO's purpose and public benefit is to deliver objective information and advice, through undertaking impartial research and analysis about birds, other wildlife and habitats, to advance the understanding of nature. We inform policies and evidence-based decisions that impact on the environment such that future generations can benefit from a healthy and wildlife-rich environment. The BTO does this by:

- Sustaining long-term extensive programmes and smaller scale intensive research to study the population trends, movements, breeding, survival, ecology and behaviour of wild birds;
- Encouraging, enthusing, training and supporting volunteers to take part in scientific studies;
- Bringing together professional scientists and volunteer birdwatchers in surveys of wildlife (particularly, but not exclusively, birds); and
- Analysing the data gathered through these studies, making information available to Government and other bodies, and publishing the results in the primary scientific literature and via the internet, the birdwatching and conservation press and the media more generally.

Strategic Report

The Strategic Report (Achievements and Performance, Plans for Future Periods) is contained in Part A of this document.

Principal Risks and Uncertainties

The trustees consider that the principal risks and uncertainties which could affect BTO's ability to deliver its objectives in the short term are public expenditure reductions leading to reduced contract, grant and partnership funding, and in the medium to long term, inflation and the final salary pension scheme deficit. These are able to be mitigated through the continued growth strategy and careful cash management.

Financial Review

The Trustees' Report, the consolidated financial statements and the accompanying notes thereto comprise Part B of this document.

Overall, there was a net income surplus of £968k, (2024/25 £307k deficit). This was a record year for legacies, increasing by £1,994k. Other fundraising was £39k lower than 2024/25. This included a slight drop in membership income. In total voluntary income formed 44% of total group income for the year (2024/25 32%). We aim to raise this to over 50% in the longer term. Income from contract work rose by £181k (4%) to £4,799k (2024/25 £4,618k).

Financial Review Cont'd

A total of £8,135k (2024/25 £7,270k) was spent during the year on carrying out, supporting and communicating ornithological research. Further increases in bond yields led to another reduction in the present value of the defined benefit pension obligation, putting the scheme in a surplus position. This surplus has been derecognised in the financial statements as the Trust cannot economically recover the excess funds through reduced contributions or cash refunds from the scheme.

Reserves

The Board has a free reserves target range of 3 to 4 months' running costs. These reserves are held against any unexpected falls in income or other unforeseen circumstances. Free reserves are total General funds less Tangible fixed assets less Designated funds. At 31 March 2026 these stood at £3,154k (2025: £2,670k), equivalent to 4.7 months' running costs (2025: 4.4 months). The Board have earmarked the funds for the 2026 pension deficit recovery payment, IT infrastructure, the Bird Atlas 2027-2031, and other initiatives arising in response to the new Strategy.

Structure, Governance and Management

Company number:	00357284 (England and Wales)
Charity number:	216652 (England and Wales) SC039193 (Scotland)
Registered Office:	The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2PU
Principal Advisers:	
Auditors	Azets Audit Services, Connexions, 159 Princes Street, Ipswich IP1 1QJ
Principal Bankers	National Westminster Bank plc, 7 Cornhill, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP33 1BQ
Solicitors	Browne Jacobson LLP, Castle Meadow Road, Nottingham NG2 1BJ
Pensions Advisers	Hughes Price Walker, Pembroke House, 15 Pembroke Rd, Clifton, Bristol BS8 3BA
Investment Advisers	The Progeny Group Ltd, 1 The Triangle, NG2 Business Park, Nottingham NG2 1AE
Insurance Brokers	One Broker, Discovery House, 4 Norwich Business Park, Whiting Road, Norwich, NR4 6DJ

Governing Document

The British Trust for Ornithology (known generally as the BTO) is a company limited by guarantee governed by its Memorandum and Articles of Association. It is registered as a charity with the Charity Commission and the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator. Membership is open to any person whose application is approved by the Board upon payment of the requisite subscription. Members undertake to contribute up to £1 each in the event of an insolvent winding up, which represents the limit of their guarantee.

Trustees

The members of the Board are the directors of the charitable company under company law and the trustees for the purpose of charity law. Those serving during the year were as follows:

Prof Z G Davies
D Buscall
I Coucher
E Dresser
Dr J Dunning (appointed 5 January 2026)
R du Feu (retired 31 December 2025)
Dr G Ludhra (appointed 1 January 2026)
S J Marquis
S J Metcalf
J E Miller
Dr R Thomas (appointed 7 January 2026)
E Thornton
Prof S Willis
Dr L Wright (retired 31 December 2025)
J M Ziff

Trustees are nominated by the Board, on the recommendation of the Governance and Nominations Committee, following open advertisement, or by members and elected by the members at the Annual General Meeting each year, to serve from the following 1 January. The normal term of office is four years, with a limit of two consecutive terms. New trustees receive a comprehensive information pack and undergo induction to brief them on the BTO and their role as company directors and trustees.

Organisation and Key Management Remuneration

The Board of Trustees is the governing body of the BTO. It meets at least four times a year. The Board is supported by the Business Development Committee, Finance & Risk Committee, Governance, Safeguarding & Inclusion Committee, Regional Network Committee and Ringing Committee. The day-to-day operational management of the BTO is delegated to the Senior Leadership Team, led by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

The salary of the CEO is determined on the basis of comparability to relevant benchmarks. The remuneration of all other staff is set according to a bespoke job evaluation scheme, benchmarked as appropriate. All salaries are subject to annual cost of living review. There is no bonus scheme.

Related Parties

The BTO's wholly owned subsidiary, BTO Services Ltd, was established to undertake commercial activities to support the work of the BTO, and gifts its profits to the Trust. On 30 August 2017 BTO Services Ltd acquired the ring manufacturer Porzana Ltd. The net assets and activities of Porzana Ltd were subsequently hived up to BTO Services Ltd and it then became dormant. On 15 November 2019 BTO Services Ltd incorporated BTO Consulting Ltd which company is dormant. 'Porzana' and 'BTO Consulting' are trading names of BTO Services Ltd.

The BTO co-operates with many other charities, with government agencies and other bodies in pursuit of its objectives, as illustrated in Parts A and B of this document.

Volunteers

The Trust depends on the contributions of many thousands of volunteers who participate in BTO surveys and other activities. The Trust is greatly indebted to them, and especially to the Regional Representatives and other regional volunteers who organise so much activity at a local level. In 2025-26 volunteers contributed 2,840,492 hours of time to BTO, an increase of 4.5% over 2024-25. New surveys such as Blackbirds in Gardens, The Heathland Bird Survey, and The Winter Bird Survey all contributed to an increase in both volunteer numbers and time commitment. We estimate this amazing contribution to have a financial value of approximately £57.6M to BTO.

Risk Management

A risk register is maintained which identifies the significant risks faced by the BTO and the measures in place to manage and mitigate those risks. These are monitored by the Senior Leadership Team and regularly reviewed and amended as appropriate by the Finance & Risk Committee and the Board.

Fundraising Standards

BTO is registered with the Fundraising Regulator and follows the Fundraising Regulator's Code of Fundraising Practice. All fundraising from individual giving is undertaken by BTO staff, and during the year we used the services of a specialist consultancy to help us research and approach charitable trusts and foundations. We have not received any complaints regarding our fundraising practices. We take all reasonable steps to treat supporters fairly and transparently, especially if we believe they may be in a vulnerable position.

Investments

The Memorandum of Association permits the Trust to invest monies not immediately required for its purposes as the trustees see fit. The trustees' investment policy is to maximise long term total return by investing in a combination of 40% high quality short-dated bonds and 60% globally diversified equities. The equities part of the portfolio is invested in a sustainable fund (see Note 10). Investment performance against benchmark was as follows:

	Portfolio	**Benchmark**
Year ended 31 March 2026	+8.88%	+10.11%
Since inception (28 August 2014)	+110.65%	+113.88%

Pensions

The Trust operates a Group Self-invested Personal Pension Scheme run by Aegon. Staff contribute to this defined contribution scheme at a minimum rate of 4% of salary, and the BTO contributes at a flat rate of 11%.

The Trust's defined benefit pension scheme, a 'final salary' scheme, is closed. The last triennial actuarial valuation of the scheme was carried out as at 31 March 2024. At that date there was a net funding deficit of £1,613k and a funding level of 87%. A deficit recovery plan was subsequently agreed between the Board and the pension fund trustees, by which the shortfall would be made good by annual lump sum deficit repair payments spread over the years to 2031. The scheme is managed by Hughes Price Walker.

Statement of Board Members' Responsibilities

The Board members are responsible, as Directors of the Company, for preparing the Annual Report (including the Strategic Report) and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company law requires the Board members to prepare financial statements for each financial year, which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and the group at the year end and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the charitable company and the group for the year.
In preparing these financial statements, Board members are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in SORP (FRS 102);
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements; and
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charitable company and the group will continue in operation.

Board members are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and the group and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006, the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 and the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006 (as amended). They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable company and the group and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Board members are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the corporate and financial information included on the Trust's website. Legislation in the United Kingdom governing the preparation and dissemination of financial statements may differ from legislation in other jurisdictions.

In so far as Board members are aware:

- there is no relevant audit information of which the Trust's auditors are unaware; and
- Board members have taken all steps that they ought to have taken to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the auditors are aware of that information.

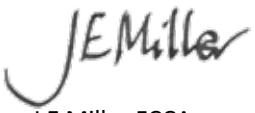
Auditors

A resolution to re-appoint the auditors will be proposed at the Annual General Meeting under section 485 of the Companies Act 2006.

The Trustees' Report (incorporating the Strategic Report) was approved by the Board as Directors and Trustees and authorised for issue on 30 July 2026.



Prof Z G Davies
Chair



J E Miller FCCA
Honorary Treasurer

Opinion
We have audited the group financial statements of The British Trust for Ornithology (the 'parent charitable company') and its subsidiaries (the 'group') for the year ended 31 March 2026 which comprise the Consolidated Statement of Financial Activities, the Charity Statement of Financial Activities, the Consolidated Group and Charity Balance Sheets, the Consolidated Group and Charity Statement of Cash Flows, and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards including FRS 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland" (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the group's and the parent charitable company's affairs as at 31 March 2026
- and of the group's and the parent charitable company's incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006, the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 and regulations 6 and 8 of the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006 (as amended).

Basis for opinion
We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditors' responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the group and parent charitable company in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern
In auditing the group financial statements, we have concluded that the trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the group or parent charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the trustees with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

Other information
The other information comprises the information included in the annual report other than the group financial statements and our auditors' report thereon. The trustees are responsible for the other information. Our opinion on the group financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon. In connection with our audit of the group financial statements, our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the course of the audit, or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether there is a material misstatement in the financial statements or a material misstatement of the other information. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinion on other matters prescribed by the Companies Act 2006
In our opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit:

- the information given in the Trustees' Annual Report, which includes the Directors' Report and the Strategic Report prepared for the purposes of company law, for the financial year for which the group financial statements are prepared is consistent with the group financial statements; and
- the Strategic Report and the Directors' Report included within the Trustees' Annual Report has been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception
In the light of our knowledge and understanding of the group and the parent charitable company and their environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified material misstatements in the Strategic Report or the Directors' Report included within the Trustees' Annual Report.

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the Companies Act 2006 and the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006 (as amended) require us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- adequate and proper accounting records have not been kept by the parent charitable company, or returns adequate for our audit have not been received from branches not visited by us; or
- the parent charitable company's financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records or returns; or
- certain disclosure of trustees' remuneration specified by law are not made; or
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit; or
- the trustees were not entitled to prepare the financial statements in accordance with the small companies regime and take advantage of the small companies' exemptions in preparing the trustees' report.

Responsibilities of Board Members
As explained more fully in the Statement of Board Members' Responsibilities set out on page B8, the trustees (who are also the directors of the British Trust for Ornithology for the purposes of company law) are responsible for the preparation of the group financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the trustees determine is necessary to enable the preparation of group financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the group financial statements, the trustees are responsible for assessing the group's and parent charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the trustees either intend to liquidate the group or the parent charitable company or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditors' responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements
We have been appointed as auditor under section 44(1)(c) of the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 and under the Companies Act 2006 and report in accordance with the Acts and relevant regulations made or having effect thereunder.

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the group financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditors' report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We design procedures in line with our responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of irregularities, including fraud. The extent to which our procedures are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud, is detailed below.

Our audit was designed, after obtaining sufficient and appropriate knowledge and understanding of the group and parent charitable company, its charitable nature, its income streams and the sector operated within. We undertook an assessment of the control environment and the systems and procedures put in place by the senior management team, combined with our detailed audit testing and supportive analytical work, to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the group financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement due to fraud. Our work has included considering areas of higher risk of fraud, including transactions with related parties, revenue recognition and areas where there is a risk of management override of systems and controls.

To address the risk of fraud we performed the following audit procedures:

- Assessment of key accounting estimates within the group financial statements in order to assess their reasonableness and determine whether there is any bias in management's estimates.

- All team members were informed of the relevant laws and regulations and potential fraud risks at the planning stage and reminded to remain alert to any indications of fraud or non-compliance.
- Enquiring of management whether there have been any alleged, suspected or actual instances of fraud during the year.
- Enquiring of management and those charged with governance whether there have been any actual or potential litigation or claims.
- Reviewing correspondence with relevant legal authorities.
- Reviewing legal expense accounts for any indicators of litigation or claims.
- Review of journal entries and other adjustments for appropriateness and evaluating the rationale of any transactions outside the normal course of business.

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the group financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website at www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of our auditors' report.

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the parent charitable company's members, as a body, in accordance with Chapter 3 of Part 16 of the Companies Act 2006 and to the charitable company's trustees, as a body, in accordance with regulation 10 of the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006 (as amended). Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the parent charitable company's members and trustees those matters we are required to state to them in an auditors' report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the parent charitable company, the parent charitable company's members as a body and its trustees as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.



Helen Rumsey, Senior Statutory Auditor
For and on behalf of
Azets Audit Services
Connexions
159 Princes Street
Ipswich
IP1 1QJ

Consolidated Statement of Financial Activities (Including Income and Expenditure Account) for the Year Ended 31 March 2026

	Note	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total 2026	Total 2025
		£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Income and endowments from:					
Donations and legacies	3	4,189	567	**4,756**	**2,801**
Charitable activities	3	4,760	39	**4,799**	**4,618**
Other trading activities	3	1,246	-	**1,246**	**1,189**
Investments	3	66	8	**74**	**104**
Total income and endowments		**10,261**	**614**	**10,875**	**8,712**
Expenditure on:					
Raising funds	4	1,806	3	**1,809**	**1,735**
Charitable activities	4	6,927	1,208	**8,135**	**7,270**
Other – Amounts recognised as expenditure on defined benefit pension scheme	23	3	-	**3**	**23**
Total expenditure		**8,736**	**1,211**	**9,947**	**9,028**
Net income/(expenditure) before net gain/(loss) on investments		1,525	(597)	**928**	**(316)**
Net gain/(loss) on investments	10	40	-	**40**	**9**
Net income/ (expenditure)		**1,565**	**(597)**	**968**	**(307)**
Transfers between funds	16,17	(367)	367	**-**	**-**
Other recognised gains/(losses):					
Actuarial gain/(loss) on defined benefit pension scheme	23	(73)	-	**(73)**	**180**
Net movement in funds		**1,125**	**(230)**	**895**	**(127)**
Reconciliation of funds					
Total funds brought forward		5,332	1,206	**6,538**	**6,665**
Total funds carried forward	16,17	**6,457**	**976**	**7,433**	**6,538**

The Statement of Financial Activities includes all gains and losses recognised during the year.
All income and expenditure derives from continuing activities.

The notes on pages 46 to 68 form part of these financial statements.

Charity Statement of Financial Activities (Including Income and Expenditure Account) for the Year Ended 31 March 2026

	Note	Unrestricted Funds £'000	Restricted Funds £'000	Total 2026 £'000	Total 2025 £'000
Income and endowments from:					
Donations and legacies	3	4,507	567	**5,074**	**3,061**
Charitable activities	3	4,760	39	**4,799**	**4,618**
Other trading activities	3	677	-	**677**	**690**
Investments	3	66	8	**74**	**104**
Total income and endowments		**10,010**	**614**	**10,624**	**8,473**
Expenditure on:					
Raising funds	4	1,555	3	**1,558**	**1,496**
Charitable activities	4	6,927	1,208	**8,135**	**7,270**
Other – Amounts recognised as expenditure on defined benefit pension scheme	23	3	-	**3**	**23**
Total expenditure		**8,485**	**1,211**	**9,696**	**8,789**
Net income/(expenditure) before net gain/(loss) on investments		1,525	(597)	**928**	**(316)**
Net gain/(loss) on investments	10	40	-	**40**	**9**
Net income/ (expenditure)		**1,565**	**(597)**	**968**	**(307)**
Transfers between funds		(367)	367	**-**	**-**
Other recognised gains/(losses):					
Actuarial gain/(loss) on defined benefit pension scheme	23	(73)	-	**(73)**	**180**
Net movement in funds		**1,125**	**(230)**	**895**	**(127)**
Reconciliation of funds					
Total funds brought forward		5,332	1,206	**6,538**	**6,665**
Total funds carried forward	16,17	**6,457**	**976**	**7,433**	**6,538**

The Statement of Financial Activities includes all gains and losses recognised during the year.
All income and expenditure derives from continuing activities.

The notes on pages 46 to 68 form part of these financial statements.

Consolidated Group and Charity Balance Sheets as at 31 March 2026

	Note	Group 2026 £'000	Group 2025 £'000	Charity 2026 £'000	Charity 2025 £'000
Fixed assets					
Tangible assets	9	2,444	2,431	2,444	2,431
Investments	10	568	529	568	529
		3,012	2,960	3,012	2,960
Current assets					
Stocks	11	240	248	-	-
Debtors	12	1,098	1,082	1,201	1,309
Cash at bank and in hand		5,627	4,967	5,443	4,853
		6,965	6,297	6,644	6,162
Creditors:					
Amounts falling due within one year	13	(2,460)	(2,450)	(2,139)	(2,315)
Net current assets		4,505	3,847	4,505	3,847
Total assets less current liabilities		7,517	6,807	7,517	6,807
Creditors:					
Amounts falling due after one year	14	(84)	(89)	(84)	(89)
Net assets excluding defined benefit pension liability		7,433	6,718	7,433	6,718
Defined benefit pension liability	23	-	(180)	-	(180)
Net assets/(liabilities) including defined benefit pension liability	18	7,433	6,538	7,433	6,538
Represented by:					
Restricted funds	16	976	1,206	976	1,206
Unrestricted funds excluding Pension reserve	17	6,457	5,512	6,457	5,512
Pension reserve	17	-	(180)	-	(180)
Total funds	18	7,433	6,538	7,433	6,538

Approved by the Board and authorised for issue on 30 July 2026 and signed on its behalf by:

Chair — Prof Z G Davies



Honorary Treasurer — J E Miller FCCA



Company registration number 00357284
The notes on pages 46 to 68 form part of these financial statements.

Consolidated Group and Charity Statement of Cash Flows
For the Year Ended 31 March 2026

	Note	Group 2026 £'000	Group 2025 £'000	Charity 2026 £'000	Charity 2025 £'000
Net cash inflow / (outflow) from operating activities	20	613	755	543	749
Cash flow from investing activities					
Payments to acquire tangible fixed assets	9	(27)	(24)	(27)	(24)
Investment income received		74	104	74	104
Net cash flow from investing activities		47	80	47	80
Net increase/(decrease) in cash for the year		660	835	590	829
Cash at bank and in hand at 01 April 25		4,967	4,132	4,853	4,024
Cash at bank and in hand at 31 March 26		5,627	4,967	5,443	4,853

Analysis of Cash at Bank and in Hand This comprises:	**2026** £'000	**2025** **£'000**	**2026** £'000	**2025** £'000
Bank current accounts and cash in hand	497	814	314	700
Bank deposits	5,130	4,153	5,129	4,153
Cash at bank and in hand at 31 March 26	5,627	4,967	5,443	4,853

Bank deposits carry variable rates of interest.

The notes on pages 46 to 68 form part of these financial statements.

Notes to the Consolidated Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 31 March 2026

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

a) Accounting Convention

The charity constitutes a public benefit entity as defined by FRS 102. The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with *Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102)* (SORP (FRS102)) effective 1 January 2019, the Charities Act 2011, the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005, the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006, the Companies Act 2006 and UK Generally Accepted Practice as it applies from 1 January 2015.

The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention, modified to include the revaluation of freehold property and the valuation of investments at fair value.

The financial statements are prepared in pounds sterling (rounded to the nearest thousand) which is the functional currency of the charitable company and the group.

The charity operates on a weekly basis and the Financial Statements have been made up to 29 March 2026, being the last Sunday in March.

b) Going Concern

The financial statements have been prepared on a going concern basis and the BTO fully expects to be able to meet its outgoing commitments and other liabilities as they fall due into the future.

The Trustees have assessed the Trust's ability to continue as a going concern. The annual budget provides evidence that covers the 2026/27 financial year and includes information on both revenue activities and capital investment expected to occur during the financial year. The Business Plan extends the timeframe covered by the budget to ten years and the Stress Testing provides information on the likely impact of changes to the assumptions that underpin both the annual budget and the longer-term Business Plan.

The annual budget for 2026/27 shows a forecast operating surplus of £69k targeted for the financial year and reasonable headroom in relation to the free reserves target.

c) Group Financial Statements

These financial statements consolidate the results of the charity and its wholly owned trading subsidiary BTO Services Limited on a line-by-line basis.

d) Income

Income from donations, gifts and legacies is recognised immediately when received in cash and as receivable where there is entitlement, the amount can be measured reliably, and it is probable that the income will be received.

Income from charitable activities includes income receivable under contracts which is recognised as earned as the related work is performed. Income from grant funding supporting charitable activities is recognised where there is entitlement, probability of receipt, and the amount can be measured with sufficient reliability.

Income is deferred when it is received in advance of the services it relates to. Life membership income is released to the Statement of Financial Activities in equal instalments over ten years.

Income from commercial activities of the trading subsidiary is recognised as earned as the related goods and services are provided.

Investment income, sponsorship and royalty income and membership subscription income are recognised on a receivable basis.

Notes to the Consolidated Financial Statements - Continued
For the Year Ended 31 March 2026

e) Expenditure

Expenditure is recognised when a liability is incurred. Costs are allocated directly to activity cost categories. The cost of holiday pay not taken at the year end is accrued.

Costs of raising funds are those incurred in attracting voluntary income, including membership subscriptions, in carrying out trading activities, and in receiving royalties and sponsorship income.

Costs of charitable activities include those incurred on scientific research contracts, and on allocated and restricted fund research work. They also include volunteer surveyor support and science communication costs.

Governance costs include those incurred in the governance of the charity and the safeguarding of its assets, and are primarily associated with constitutional and statutory requirements.

Support costs include central functions and have been allocated to activity cost categories on a staff cost basis.

VAT is reclaimed on allowable expenses under the Business/Non-Business and the partial exemption rules. Where not reclaimable it is included within expenses.

f) Tangible Fixed Assets

Individual assets costing £1k or more are initially capitalised at cost. Tangible fixed assets (except freehold property and land) are depreciated on a straight line basis over their estimated useful lives as follows:

Asset Category	Annual Rate
Furniture and Equipment	25%
Computer Equipment	25%
Motor Vehicles	25%

The freehold property is stated at fair value under the revaluation model using sufficiently regular revaluations to ensure that the carrying amount does not differ materially from the fair value at the reporting date. Revaluations are performed every five years, or as the trustees consider necessary, by qualified external valuers. The increase or decrease on revaluation is credited or charged to the fund holding the asset. The property is not depreciated as it is considered to have an indefinite remaining useful life.

At each reporting end date, the trustees review the carrying amounts of the tangible assets to determine whether there is any indication that those assets have suffered an impairment loss. If any such indication exists, the recoverable amount of the asset is estimated in order to determine the extent of the impairment loss (if any).

g) Investments

Investments are recognised initially at fair value which is normally the transaction price excluding transaction costs. Subsequently, they are measured at fair value with changes recognised in 'Net gain/(loss) on investments' in the Statement of Financial Activities if the shares are publicly traded or their fair value can otherwise be measured reliably. Other investments are measured at cost less impairment.

h) Stock

Stock is valued at the lower of cost and net realisable value. Net realisable value is based on estimated selling price less further costs to completion and sale. Cost is calculated on a first in first out basis.

i) Debtors and creditors falling due within one year

Debtors and creditors with no stated interest rate and falling due within one year are recorded at transaction price. Any losses arising from impairment are recognised in expenditure.

Notes to the Consolidated Financial Statements - Continued
For the Year Ended 31 March 2026

j) Financial instruments

The group only has financial assets and liabilities that qualify as basic financial instruments, such as debtors and creditors with no stated interest rate and payable within one year, which are recorded at transaction price. Any losses arising from impairment are recognised as expenditure in the Statement of Financial Activities.

k) Foreign Currency Translation

Monetary assets and liabilities denominated in foreign currencies are translated into pounds sterling at the rates of exchange ruling at the balance sheet dates. Transactions in foreign currencies are recorded at the rate ruling at the transaction date. All exchange differences are taken to the Statement of Financial Activities.

l) Funds Structure

The Trust has a number of restricted funds to account for situations where funds have been raised for a specific purpose. All other funds are unrestricted funds. Where the trustees intend to use part of the unrestricted funds to provide longer-term funding for BTO projects and core activities, designated funds are set up to reflect this. A Pension reserve fund has been created so that movements and balances relating to the defined benefit pension scheme valuations can be separately identified. The funds in each of these categories are disclosed in Notes 16 and 17.

m) Retirement Benefits

The defined benefit pension scheme provides benefits for staff based on final pensionable salary. The scheme was closed to future accrual with effect from 1 April 2013. The assets of the scheme are held separately from those of the Trust, being invested with independent fund managers and are measured at fair value with changes recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities as set out in Note 23. Defined benefit pension liabilities are measured using the projected unit cost method and discounted at the current rate of return on a high quality corporate bond of equivalent term and currency to the liability. Under FRS 102, any net liability arising based on these valuations is the best estimate of the present value of the actual amounts to be paid out of the scheme, less the fair value of the scheme assets. The net of the interests on the scheme assets and liabilities is charged to the Statement of Financial Activities. Past service costs are recognised as expenditure when a liability is incurred and are charged to the Statement of Financial Activities. Actuarial gains and losses are recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities.

The Trust as employer also makes payments in respect of employees' own defined contribution schemes, through a group self-invested personal pension arrangement. For these schemes, the amount charged to the Statement of Financial Activities in respect of pension costs is the contributions payable in the year. Differences between contributions payable in the year and contributions actually paid are included as either accruals or prepayments in the Balance Sheet.

n) Judgements and key sources of estimation uncertainty

In the application of the group and parent charitable company's accounting policies, the trustees are required to make judgements, estimates and assumptions about the carrying amount of assets and liabilities that are not readily apparent from other sources. The estimates and associated assumptions are based on historical experience and other factors that are considered to be relevant. Actual results may differ from these estimates.

The estimates and underlying assumptions are reviewed on an ongoing basis. Revisions to accounting estimates are recognised in the year in which the estimate is revised where the revision affects only that year, or in the year of the revision and future years where the revision affects both the current and future years.

Key sources of estimation uncertainty
The estimates and assumptions which have a significant risk of causing a material adjustment to the carrying amount of assets and liabilities are as follows:

Notes to the Consolidated Financial Statements - Continued
For the Year Ended 31 March 2026

n) Judgements and key sources of estimation uncertainty (continued)

Percentage completion on contracts
The degree of completion on the contracts is an estimate by the relevant project manager. This estimate relies on their professional opinion on the level of work completed in the whole contract, which impacts the level of income recognised, accrued and deferred. These estimates are reviewed by the Senior Leadership Team on a regular basis.

Defined benefit pension scheme
The group has a defined benefit pension scheme which is closed to future accrual. The valuation of the defined benefit pension obligation necessarily involves a calculation which depends on the expected future outflow of economic benefits that the group expects to make to satisfy this obligation. The calculation depends on a number of factors such as the methodology, discount rate and mortality assumptions used. The group use a qualified independent actuary to assist in preparing the necessary calculation in accordance with the requirements of FRS102.

Property valuation
The Nunnery is valued at fair value by the directors with reference to recent property transactions and their knowledge of the site. The directors obtain third party valuations at regular intervals to ensure that the fair value of the property is kept up to date.

o) Leases
Rentals payable under operating leases, including any lease incentives received, are charged to profit or loss on a straight line basis over the term of the relevant lease except where another more systematic basis is more representative of the time pattern in which economic benefits from the leased asset are consumed.

p) Employee benefits
The costs of short-term employee benefits are recognised as a liability and an expense unless those costs are required to be recognised as part of the cost of stock or fixed assets. The cost of any unused holiday entitlement is recognised in the year in which the employee's services are received. Termination benefits are recognised immediately as an expense when the charity is demonstrably committed to terminate the employment of an employee or to provide termination benefits.

q) Cash at bank and in hand
Cash at bank and in hand are basic financial assets and includes cash in hand, deposits with banks, other short-term liquid investments with original maturities of three months or less, and bank overdrafts.

r) Legacies
Legacy receipts are recognised when there has been grant of probate, the executors have established that there are sufficient assets in the estate, after settling any liabilities, to pay the legacy, any conditions attached to the legacy are either within the control of the Trust or have been met, and the amount receivable is determined.

2. MEMBERS' LIABILITY

Under the Memorandum of Association of the Trust, members are required to undertake to contribute to the assets of the Trust in the event of its being wound up while they are members, and within one year after they cease to be members, for payment of the debts and liabilities of the Trust contracted whilst they were still members, and of the costs, charges and expenses of winding up, such amount as may be required but not exceeding £1 each. This represents the limit of their guarantee to the company.

Notes to the Consolidated Financial Statements - Continued
For the Year Ended 31 March 2026

3. ANALYSIS OF INCOME

	Group 2026	Group 2025	Charity 2026	Charity 2025
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Donations and legacies				
Membership subscriptions & donations	991	1,005	991	1,005
Individual donations	490	654	490	654
Corporate & trust donations & grants	482	343	800	603
Legacies	2,793	799	2,793	799
	4,756	2,801	5,074	3,061
Charitable activities				
Core surveys - JNCC Partnership	1,393	1,418	1,393	1,418
Core surveys - Other	45	56	45	56
Other surveys & research - Contract funded	3,143	2,909	3,143	2,909
Research communication	87	109	87	109
General volunteer survey support	101	102	101	102
Nunnery Lakes Reserve	30	24	30	24
	4,799	4,618	4,799	4,618
Other trading activities				
Ringing & tagging sales	507	448	-	-
Publications & general sales	21	22	-	-
Corporate sponsorship & royalties	58	61	-	-
Consultancy	368	419	-	-
Data-related sales	289	237	-	-
Other	3	2	3	2
Income from charges to subsidiary	-	-	674	688
	1,246	1,189	677	690
Investment income				
Bank interest receivable	74	104	74	104

Analysis by fund type	Group 2026	Group 2025	Charity 2026	Charity 2025
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Donations and legacies				
Unrestricted	4,189	2,296	4,507	2,556
Restricted	567	505	567	505
	4,756	2,801	5,074	3,061
Charitable activities				
Unrestricted	4,760	4,607	4,760	4,607
Restricted	39	11	39	11
	4,799	4,618	4,799	4,618
Other trading activities				
Unrestricted	1,246	1,189	677	690
Restricted	-	-	-	-
	1,246	1,189	677	690
Investment income				
Unrestricted	66	92	66	92
Restricted	8	12	8	12
	74	104	74	104

Notes to the Consolidated Financial Statements - Continued
For the Year Ended 31 March 2026

4. ANALYSIS OF EXPENDITURE

	Group 2026 £'000	Group 2025 £'000	Charity 2026 £'000	Charity 2025 £'000
Raising funds				
Donations and legacies				
Membership subscriptions & donations	377	310	377	310
Individual donations	334	304	334	304
Corporate & trust donations & grants	54	85	54	85
Legacies	126	120	126	120
	891	819	891	819
Other trading activities				
Ringing & tagging costs	492	456	-	-
Publications & general costs	22	26	-	-
Consultancy	251	290	-	-
Data-related costs	144	137	-	-
Other	9	7	-	-
Costs recharged to subsidiary	-	-	667	677
	918	916	667	677
	1,809	1,735	1,558	1,496
Charitable activities				
Core surveys - JNCC Partnership	2,124	2,054	2,124	2,054
Core surveys – Other	374	280	374	280
Other surveys & research - Voluntary funded	1,133	830	1,133	830
Other surveys & research - Contract funded	3,363	3,018	3,363	3,018
Research communication	836	797	836	797
General volunteer survey support	268	246	268	246
Nunnery Lakes Reserve	37	45	37	45
	8,135	7,270	8,135	7,270

Analysis by fund type	Group 2026	Group 2025	Charity 2026	Charity 2025
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Raising funds				
Unrestricted	1,806	1,718	1,555	1,479
Restricted	3	17	3	17
	1,809	1,735	1,558	1,496
Charitable activities				
Unrestricted	6,927	6,664	6,927	6,664
Restricted	1,208	606	1,208	606
	8,135	7,270	8,135	7,270

Notes to the Consolidated Financial Statements - Continued
For the Year Ended 31 March 2026

5. NET INCOME / (EXPENDITURE)	2026 £'000	2025 £'000
Net income/expenditure for the year is stated after (crediting)/ charging: Auditors' remuneration:		
Audit of the charity's annual accounts	24	22
Audit of the trading subsidiary's annual accounts	12	10
Audit of the charity's defined benefit pension scheme	4	3
Depreciation (Note 9)	14	19
(Profit)/loss on disposals of fixed assets	-	1

6. STAFF COSTS	Group and Charity 2026 £'000	Group and Charity 2025 £'000
Wages and salaries	5,861	5,319
Social security costs	690	490
Defined contribution pension plan costs (Note 23)	611	560
Expenditure recognised on defined benefit pension scheme (Note 23)	3	23
	7,165	6,392

The number of employees whose emoluments exceeded £60,000 fell within the following bands:	2026	2025
£80,001 - £90,000	1	1
£70,001 - £80,000	2	-
£60,001 - £70,000	10	5

The emoluments of the CEO for the year were £83k (2025 £81k), with the same pension and other benefits as were applicable to all other staff. The total remuneration including social security costs and pension contributions of the Senior Leadership Team was £588k (2025: £553k). Trustees receive no remuneration. Trustees made donations totalling less than £1k during the year (2025 less than £1k). There were no other related party transactions requiring disclosure. Other expenses were reimbursed to trustees as follows:

	2026 £'000	2025 £'000
Travel and subsistence	1	1

Average numbers of staff and full time equivalents (FTE)

	2026		2025	
	No	FTE	No	FTE
Permanent posts	172	158.6	159	145.3
Seasonal fieldworkers	4	1.2	4	1.0
	176	159.8	163	146.3

Notes to the Consolidated Financial Statements - Continued
For the Year Ended 31 March 2026

7. TOTAL EXPENDITURE

	Direct costs £'000	Support costs £'000	2026 Total £'000	2025 Total £'000
Raising funds	1,613	196	1,809	1,735
Charitable activities	7,273	862	8,135	7,270
Other – Amounts recognised as expenditure on defined benefit pension scheme	3	-	3	23
	8,889	1,058	9,947	9,028

8. SUPPORT COSTS

	Premises £'000	IT & Office Services £'000	People & OrgDev £'000	Manage-ment & Finance £'000	Govern-ance £'000	2026 Total £'000	2025 Total £'000
Raising funds	3	9	76	92	16	196	184
Charitable activities	12	42	342	396	70	862	773
	15	51	418	488	86	1,058	957

All support costs are apportioned on a staff cost basis.
Governance costs include auditors' remuneration, the meeting expenses of the Board and its committees, and the staff cost of servicing those meetings.

9. TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS - GROUP

	Freehold Property and Land £'000	Furniture and Equipment £'000	Computer Equipment £'000	Motor Vehicles £'000	Total £'000
Cost or valuation at 01 April 2025	2,400	154	348	92	2,994
Additions	-	2	25	-	27
Disposals	-	(6)	-	-	(6)
At 31 March 2026	2,400	150	373	92	3,015
Depreciation at 01 April 2025	-	151	320	92	563
Depreciation charge	-	2	12	-	14
Disposals	-	(6)	-	-	(6)
At 31 March 2026	-	147	332	92	571
Net book value at 01 April 2025	2,400	3	28	-	2,431
Net book value at 31 March 2026	2,400	3	41	-	2,444

Notes to the Consolidated Financial Statements - Continued
For the Year Ended 31 March 2026

9. TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS - CHARITY

	Freehold Property and Land	Furniture and Equipment	Computer Equipment	Motor Vehicles	Total
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Cost or valuation at 01 April 2025	2,400	150	348	92	2,990
Additions	-	2	25	-	27
Disposals	-	(6)	-	-	(6)
At 31 March 2026	2,400	146	373	92	3,011
Depreciation at 01 April 2025	-	147	320	92	559
Depreciation charge	-	2	12	-	14
Disposals	-	(6)	-	-	(6)
At 31 March 2026	-	143	332	92	567
Net book value at 01 April 2025	2,400	3	28	-	2,431
Net book value at 31 March 2026	2,400	3	41	-	2,444

The Nunnery and Nunnery Lakes Reserve, the freehold property and land owned and occupied by The British Trust for Ornithology, were valued by qualified external valuers, Fenn Wright Chartered Surveyors, on 11 June 2026 on the basis of fair value, at £2,400k. The trustees have considered the condition and value of the freehold property at the year end and believe there to have been no material change since the last external valuation in March 2022.

On an historical cost basis, the freehold property and land would have been included at a cost and net book value of £2,284k (2025: £2,284k).

Notes to the Consolidated Financial Statements - Continued
For the Year Ended 31 March 2026

10. INVESTMENTS

The Group

Listed Investment Funds

	Market value 1 April 2025	Disposals	Additions	Gain/(loss)	Market value 31 March 2026
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Birds in Trust Fund					
Dimensional Global Short Dated Bond	76	-	-	(1)	75
Dimensional Global Sustainability Core Equity	156	-	-	17	173
Wrap Cash	4	-	-	2	6
	236	-	-	18	254
General Funds					
Dimensional Global Short Dated Bond	93	-	-	-	93
Dimensional Global Sustainability Core Equity	194	-	-	20	213
Wrap Cash	6	-	-	2	8
	293	-	-	22	314
	529	-	-	40	568

On an historical cost basis, the investments would have been included at £298k (2025: £298k).

The Charity

	2026	2025
	£'000	£'000
Listed Investment Funds as above	568	529
Fixed asset unlisted investments - BTO Services Ltd	-	-
	568	529

The Trust wholly owns its subsidiary undertaking, BTO Services Ltd, which is incorporated in England & Wales, company registration number 02907282. This company operates to promote the work of The British Trust for Ornithology by undertaking commercial activities to support such work. The aggregate value of the share capital and reserves at the year end was £100 (2025: £100) and the company reported a £nil result after profit distributions made under a Deed of Covenant for the year (2025: £nil). The value of the investment in the subsidiary undertaking is £100 (2025: £100) under the equity method of valuation.

The following is a summarised statement of income for the subsidiary for the financial year:

	2026	2025
	£'000	£'000
Turnover	1,243	1,187
Cost of sales	(857)	(870)
Gross profit	386	317
Net administrative expenses	(68)	(63)
Net profit before payment under Deed of Covenant	318	254

Turnover of the subsidiary includes sales to overseas markets of £173k (2025: £249k).

Notes to the Consolidated Financial Statements - Continued
For the Year Ended 31 March 2026

10. INVESTMENTS (Continued)

BTO Services Ltd has two dormant wholly owned subsidiaries, both registered in England and Wales, and with Registered Office at The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2PU, Porzana Ltd Company No.04175071 and BTO Consulting Ltd Company No.12317596.

11. STOCKS

	2026	2025
	£'000	£'000
The Group		
Finished goods, goods for resale and materials	240	248
The Charity		
The charity holds no trading stock.		

12. DEBTORS

	2026	2025
	£'000	£'000
The Group		
Trade and contract debtors	538	569
Taxes recoverable	19	61
Prepayments	136	116
Accrued income	405	336
	1,098	1,082

	2026	2025
	£'000	£'000
The Charity		
Trade and contract debtors	315	413
Amounts due from Group undertakings	350	479
Taxes recoverable	19	61
Prepayments	133	114
Accrued income	384	242
	1,201	1,309

Notes to the Consolidated Financial Statements - Continued
For the Year Ended 31 March 2026

13. CREDITORS – AMOUNTS FALLING DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR

	2026	2025
	£'000	£'000
The Group		
Trade creditors	373	460
Taxes and Social security costs	301	298
Other creditors	160	153
Accruals	171	157
Deferred income	1,455	1,382
	2,460	2,450

	2026	2025
	£'000	£'000
The Charity		
Trade creditors	363	404
Taxes and Social security costs	269	278
Other creditors	157	151
Accruals	161	145
Deferred income	1,189	1,337
	2,139	2,315

14. CREDITORS – AMOUNTS FALLING DUE AFTER ONE YEAR

	2026	2025
	£'000	£'000
The Group		
Deferred income	84	89

	2026	2025
	£'000	£'000
The Charity		
Deferred income	84	89

15. DEFERRED INCOME RECONCILIATION

	2026	2025
	£'000	£'000
The Group		
Opening balance at 1 April	1,471	1,490
Amount released to income	(2,279)	(2,404)
Amount deferred in year	2,348	2,385
Closing balance at 31 March	1,540	1,471

	2026	2025
	£'000	£'000
The Charity		
Opening balance at 1 April	1,425	1,438
Amount released to income	(2,173)	(2,350)
Amount deferred in year	2,022	2,337
Closing balance at 31 March	1,274	1,425

Notes to the Consolidated Financial Statements - Continued
For the Year Ended 31 March 2026

16. RESTRICTED FUNDS

The Group and the Charity

The funds of the group and the charity include restricted funds comprising the following balances of donations and appeal monies given for specific purposes. The opening and closing fund balances for the group and the charity are identical.

As at 31 March 2026

	Balance at 1 Apr 2025	Income	Expenditure	Transfers	Balance at 31 Mar 2026
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Atlas Appeal	112	44	(228)	72	-
Northern Ireland Fund	5	8	(9)	-	4
Dilys Breese Fund	30	3	(22)	-	11
Migration Fund	19	2	(7)	-	14
Swallow Appeal	8	-	-	(8)	-
Young Scientists' Fund	4	-	(2)	-	2
Garden Research Fund	75	7	(24)	-	58
Out of Africa Fund	20	55	(75)	-	-
Thrush Fund	1	-	-	(1)	-
Curlew Appeal	11	9	(6)	-	14
BTO Wales Fund	12	225	(201)	-	36
Sound Approach Fund	41	36	(32)	-	45
Tasso Leventis Fund	-	-	(1)	1	-
Spotted Flycatcher Appeal	17	-	(7)	-	10
Chaffinch	34	-	(2)	-	32
Seabird Appeal	30	20	(35)	11	26
Urban Appeal	208	4	(179)	213	246
BBS Appeal	91	14	-	1	106
Breeding Waders Appeal	-	1	-	-	1
Rhodes Training Fund	33	-	-	-	33
Migrant Swallows & Insect Feeding Paper	2	-	-	(2)	-
Postcode Lottery Grant	3	-	-	-	3
Cuckoos & Nightingales	10	-	(8)	-	2
Bats Fund	29	32	(3)	-	58
Youth Engagement	-	18	(142)	124	-
Wader Project Officer	31	-	(27)	0	4
Insect Decline	29	11	(20)	10	30
Eddowes PhD	14	33	(45)	-	2
Thetford Engagement Fund	9	-	(8)	-	1
Kestrels	9	-	(8)	3	4
Gillian Wills Trust	29	36	(36)	-	29
Derek Coleman Fund	40	-	(35)	-	5
David Hodgson Fund	91	-	-	(27)	64
Raptor Monitoring Appeal	91	12	(9)	-	94
Youth 25	21	40	(26)	(16)	19
Ringers' Bursary Fund	2	-	(1)	-	1
Small Specific Donations	45	4	(13)	(14)	22
	1,206	614	(1,211)	367	976

Notes to the Consolidated Financial Statements – Continued
For the Year Ended 31 March 2026

16. RESTRICTED FUNDS (Continued)

The purposes of the funds are as follows:
The Atlas Appeal (previously Atlas Beyond the Maps) supports research and production of the Bird Atlas. £72K was transferred from F2 Birds in Trust to support work on the new Atlas.
The Northern Ireland Fund has been set up to support the BTO in Northern Ireland.
The Dilys Breese Fund is for projects relating to nesting birds.
The Migration Fund is for research into migrating birds.
The Swallow Appeal is to fund work on Swallows and migration. The £8k closing balance was transferred to Insect Decline Fund.
The Young Scientists' Fund is to support the career development of young scientists.
The Garden Research Fund is to support young scientists' work on garden birds.
The Out of Africa Fund is to fund work on African migrants.
The Thrush Fund is to fund work on Thrushes. The £1k closing balance was transferred to the BBS Appeal.
The Curlew Appeal is to fund projects on Curlews.
The BTO Wales Fund is to support the BTO in Wales.
The Sound Approach Fund is to support a number of specific projects.
The Tasso Leventis Fund is to support a number of specific projects. £1k was transferred from General Funds to support these projects.
The Spotted Flycatcher Appeal is to support work on Spotted Flycatchers.
The Chaffinch Appeal is to fund work on Chaffinches.
The Seabird Appeal raises funds for work on seabirds. £11k was transferred from General Funds to support this work.
The Urban Appeal is to support studies of birds in towns and cities. £213k was transferred from Birds in Trust in accordance with Legator's wishes.
The BBS Appeal is to fund work for Breeding Bird Surveys. The £1k closing balance of the Thrush Fund was transferred here to support this work.
The Breeding Waders Appeal is to fund work on breeding waders.
The Rhodes Training Fund is to support survey training courses.
The Migrant Swallows & Insect Feeding Paper donation is to fund a paper on Swallows. £2k closing balance was transferred to Insect Decline Fund
The Postcode Lottery Grant is for the Nunnery Lakes Reserve.
The Cuckoos & Nightingales Fund is for research on Cuckoos and Nightingales.
The Bats Fund was set up from specific donations to support work on Bats and the development of the BTO acoustic work.
The Youth Engagement Fund has been set up to support our work with young people. £27.5k was allocated from the David Hodgson Fund to support Youth Staff and Projects. £16k was transferred from Youth 25 to support Youth Engagement. £81K was transferred from General funds to support Youth work.
The Wader Project Officer Appeal Fund is for work on waders.
The Insect Decline Fund is to support work on the decline in insects.
The Eddowes PhD fund was established to support a specific PhD project.
The Thetford Engagement Fund is for working with local communities to enhance BTO's engagement with them.
The Kestrels Fund is to support work on Kestrels. £3k was transferred here from Small Restricted Donations for work on Kestrels.
The Gillian Wills Trust is to support the recruitment and employment of a Development and Engagement Coordinator.
The Derek Coleman Fund is to support Upland Monitoring.
The David Hodgson Fund provides support for our Youth Engagement Officer, Youth Birdcamp and Youth Engagement projects. £27.5k was transferred to Youth Engagement in accordance with the donor's wishes.
The Raptor Monitoring Appeal is for work on birds of prey.
The Youth 25 Fund supports Youth Engagement. £16k was transferred to Youth Engagement to support their projects.
The Ringers' Bursary Fund is to support ringing.
Small Specific Donations are small individual donations for specific purposes. £8k was transferred to unrestricted Funds in accordance with donor's wishes, £3k was transferred to Kestrels Fund and £3k was transferred to General Funds for purchase of Media Room Fixed Assets, as per donor's wishes.

Notes to the Consolidated Financial Statements – Continued
For the Year Ended 31 March 2026

16. RESTRICTED FUNDS (Continued)

As at 31 March 2025

	Balance at 1 Apr 2024	Income	Expenditure	Transfers	Balance at 31 Mar 2025
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Atlas Beyond Maps Appeal	108	3	-	1	112
Northern Ireland Fund	14	-	(9)	-	5
Dilys Breese Fund	36	2	(8)	-	30
Migration Fund	30	2	(13)	-	19
Nightingale Appeal	11	3	(19)	5	-
Swallow Appeal	8	-	-	-	8
Young Scientists' Fund	20	-	(16)	-	4
Garden Research Fund	72	8	(5)	-	75
Out of Africa Fund	32	76	(91)	3	20
Thrush Fund	1	-	-	-	1
Curlew Appeal	14	-	(3)	-	11
Arctic Skua Fund	13	-	(13)	-	-
BTO Wales Fund	15	3	(6)	-	12
Sound Approach Fund	54	19	(32)	-	41
Tasso Leventis Fund	-	19	(39)	20	-
Spotted Flycatcher Appeal	20	-	(3)	-	17
Chaffinch	34	-	-	-	34
Seabird Appeal	49	29	(48)	-	30
Urban Appeal	250	5	(47)	-	208
BBS Appeal	-	91	-	-	91
Rhodes Training Fund	33	-	-	-	33
Migrant Swallows & Insect Feeding Paper	2	-	-	-	2
Postcode Lottery Grant	3	-	-	-	3
Cuckoos & Nightingales	11	-	(1)	-	10
Bats Fund	24	7	(2)	-	29
Youth Engagement	2	20	(122)	100	-
Wader Project Officer	27	1	-	3	31
Insect Decline	18	11	-	-	29
Eddowes PhD	-	15	(1)	-	14
Thetford Engagement Fund	29	29	(37)	(12)	9
Kestrels	28	3	(22)	-	9
Gillian Wills Trust	29	36	(36)	-	29
Derek Coleman Fund	51	10	(21)	-	40
David Hodgson Fund	121	-	-	(30)	91
Raptor Monitoring Appeal	-	104	(18)	5	91
Youth 25	-	35	(14)	-	21
Ringers' Bursary Fund	5	-	(3)	-	2
Small Specific Donations	48	11	(8)	(6)	45
	1,212	528	(623)	89	1,206

Notes to the Consolidated Financial Statements – Continued
For the Year Ended 31 March 2026

17. UNRESTRICTED FUNDS

The Group and the Charity

The funds of the group and the charity include unrestricted funds comprising the following balances. The opening and closing fund balances for the group and the charity are identical.

As at 31 March 2026

	Balance at 1 Apr 2025	Income	Expend-iture	Other Gains/ (Losses)	Fund transfers	Balance at 31 Mar 2026
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
General funds:						
Birds in Trust fund	4,177	2,870	(347)	18	(1,983)	4,735
General fund	924	7,386	(8,294)	22	825	864
	5,101	10,256	(8,641)	40	(1,158)	5,599
Designated funds:						
Hart fund	-	-	-	-	500	500
Welch fund	411	5	(92)	-	35	359
	411	5	(92)	-	535	859
Unrestricted funds excluding Pension reserve	5,512	10,261	(8,733)	40	(623)	6,457
Pension reserve	(180)	-	(3)	(73)	256	-
	5,332	10,261	(8,736)	(33)	(367)	6,457

The Birds in Trust fund is intended primarily to provide long-term funding for BTO projects. Income from legacies is credited to this fund unless the wills provide otherwise. £662k was released to the General fund in support of JNCC Partnership projects, £500k was released to the General Funds to support BTO Funded projects. A legacy of £214k was transferred to the Urban Appeal and £35k was transferred to the Welch Fund in accordance with legator's wishes. £72k was transferred to the Atlas Fund.
In the General fund, £662k was received from Birds in Trust in support of JNCC Partnership Projects, £500k was received from Birds in Trust to support BTO Funded projects. £193k was transferred to the Pension Reserve Fund in respect of the pension deficit repair contributions. £81k was released in support of Youth Engagement. £3k was released from Small Donations for purchase of Media Room Fixed Assets. The Balance of £7k on Biodiversity Loss was transferred into unrestricted funds in accordance with the fundraising terms. £11k was released to the Seabird Appeal. The £8k closing balance of a phenology project in Small Restricted Donations was moved to General Funds.
The Welch fund is for migration research. £35k was received from Birds in Trust as per Legator's wish.
The Hart fund is part of an unrestricted legacy donation which Board have designated for funding the Bird Atlas 2027-31.
The Pension Reserve fund reflects the defined benefit pension scheme deficit. £193k was transferred from the General fund in respect of the pension deficit repair contribution. Other pension reserve movements are disclosed in Note 23.

Notes to the Consolidated Financial Statements – Continued
For the Year Ended 31 March 2026

17. UNRESTRICTED FUNDS (Continued)

As at 31 March 2025

	Balance at 1 Apr 2024	Income	Expend-iture	Other Gains/ (Losses)	Fund transfers	Balance at 31 Mar 2025
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
General funds:						
Birds in Trust fund	4,184	874	(259)	4	(626)	4,177
General fund	1,355	7,303	(8,026)	5	287	924
	5,539	8,177	(8,285)	9	(339)	5,101
Designated funds:						
Welch fund	501	7	(97)	-	-	411
Unrestricted funds excluding Pension reserve	6,040	8,184	(8,382)	9	(339)	5,512
Pension reserve	(587)	-	(23)	180	250	(180)
	5,453	8,184	(8,405)	189	(89)	5,332

Notes to the Consolidated Financial Statements - Continued
For the Year Ended 31 March 2026

18. ANALYSIS OF FUNDS ACROSS NET ASSETS

The Group and Charity
As at 31 March 2026

	Fixed Assets	Investments	Current Assets less Total Liabilities	Defined Benefit Pension Liability	Total Net Assets
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Unrestricted Funds					
General funds:					
Birds in Trust fund	-	253	4,481	-	4,734
General fund	2,444	315	(1,895)	-	864
	2,444	568	2,586	-	5,598
Designated funds:					
Hart fund	-	-	500	-	500
Welch fund	-	-	359	-	359
	-	-	859	-	859
Unrestricted funds excluding Pension reserve	2,444	568	3,445	-	6,457
Pension reserve	-	-	-	-	-
	2,444	568	3,445	-	6,457
Restricted Funds	-	-	976	-	976
Total	2,444	568	4,421	-	7,433

The Group and Charity
As at 31 March 2025

	Fixed Assets	Investments	Current Assets less Total Liabilities	Defined Benefit Pension Liability	Total Net Assets
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Unrestricted Funds					
General funds:					
Birds in Trust fund	-	236	3,941	-	4,177
General fund	2,431	293	(1,620)	(180)	924
	2,431	529	2,321	(180)	5,101
Designated funds:					
Welch fund	-	-	411	-	411
Unrestricted funds excluding Pension reserve	2,431	529	2,732	(180)	5,512
Pension reserve	-	-	(180)	-	(180)
	2,431	529	2,552	(180)	5,332
Restricted Funds	-	-	1,206	-	1,206
Total	2,431	529	3,758	(180)	6,538

Notes to the Consolidated Financial Statements – Continued
For the Year Ended 31 March 2026

19. OPERATING LEASE COMMITMENTS

	2026	2025
	£'000	£'000
At the year end the group had outstanding lease commitments for future minimum lease payments under non-cancellable leases, as follows:		
Due within one year	53	64
Due within two to five years	70	118
	123	182

20. RECONCILIATION OF NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE) TO NET CASHFLOW FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES

	Group 2026	Group 2025	Charity 2026	Charity 2025
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Net income per Statement of Financial Activities	968	(307)	968	(307)
Adjustments for:				
Items representing cash movements				
(Increase)/decrease in stocks	8	(4)	-	-
(Increase)/decrease in debtors	(16)	1,188	108	1,202
Increase/(decrease) in creditors	6	200	(180)	175
Investment income	(74)	(104)	(74)	(104)
Items not representing cash movements				
Depreciation	14	19	14	19
(Gains)/losses on investments	(40)	(9)	(40)	(9)
Expenditure on defined benefit pension plan liability	3	23	3	23
	869	1,005	799	999
Cash movements not appearing in the Statement of Financial Activities				
Pension deficit repair contribution	(256)	(250)	(256)	(250)
Net cash inflow/(outflow) from operating activities	613	755	543	749

Notes to the Consolidated Financial Statements – Continued
For the Year Ended 31 March 2026

21. FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS

The carrying amounts of the group's and the charity's financial instruments are as follows:

	Group 2026 £'000	Group 2025 £'000	Charity 2026 £'000	Charity 2025 £'000
Financial assets				
Measured at fair value through net income/expenditure:				
Fixed asset listed investments (Note 10)	568	529	568	529
Equity instruments measured at cost less impairments:				
Fixed asset unlisted investments (Note 10)			-	-

22. CONTINGENT ASSET

In the financial statements as at 31 March 2025, the Trust disclosed a contingent asset where the recognition criteria under the Charities SORP (FRS 102) had not been met.

Specifically, the Trust had been named as a beneficiary in the will of a deceased individual, with an entitlement to a residential property. As at 31 March 2025, entitlement had not been confirmed, the estate remained in the process of administration, legal title had not transferred to the Trust, and the timing and amount of any potential benefit remained uncertain. The property was expected to realise proceeds of approximately £850k on sale.

The legacy was confirmed during 2025/26 and net proceeds of £794k from the sale of the property have been recognised as legacy income in the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2026.

Notes to the Consolidated Financial Statements - Continued
For the Year Ended 31 March 2026

23. PENSIONS

The Group and the Charity

Defined contribution pension plan
The Trust operates a Group Self-invested Personal Pension Scheme run by Aegon. Staff contribute to this defined contribution scheme at a minimum rate of 4% of salary, and the BTO contributes at a flat rate of 11%. The Trust made contributions of £611k during the year (2025: £560k).

Defined benefit pension scheme
The Trust's defined benefit pension scheme, a 'final salary' scheme, is closed. The last triennial actuarial valuation of the scheme was carried out as at 31 March 2024. At that date the assets were valued at £11,102k and the liabilities at £12,715k, giving a net deficit of £1,613k and a funding level of 87%. A deficit recovery plan was subsequently agreed between the Board and the pension fund trustees, by which the shortfall would be made good by annual lump sum deficit repair payments spread over the years to 2031.

For the purposes of the group financial statements a separate valuation is carried out at the balance sheet date by a qualified independent actuary in accordance with Financial Reporting Standard 102 (FRS 102). The amounts recognised in the statements of financial activities for the year and the balance sheets were as follows:

Recognised in the statements of financial activities:	**2026**	**2025**
	£'000	£'000
Expenditure:		
Interest income	614	546
Interest cost on liabilities	(617)	(569)
Net interest on net defined benefit liability	(3)	(23)
Other recognised gains/(losses):		
Actual return on scheme assets (excluding interest income)	55	(953)
Actuarial gain/(loss) on liabilities	141	1,133
Asset not recognised	(269)	-
	(73)	180

Recognised in the balance sheets:

	2026	**2025**
	£'000	£'000
Fair value of scheme assets	10,914	10,557
Present value of defined benefit obligations	(10,645)	(10,737)
Defined benefit pension scheme asset/liability at 31 March 26	269	(180)
Asset not recognised	(269)	-
Defined benefit pension scheme asset/liability at 31 March 26	-	(180)

Reconciliation of funded status:

	2026	**2025**
	£'000	£'000
(Deficit) at 31 March 25	(180)	(587)
Employer pension deficit repair payment	256	250
Net interest on net defined benefit liability	(3)	(23)
Remeasurement gain	196	180
Surplus/(Deficit) at 31 March 26	269	(180)

Notes to the Consolidated Financial Statements - Continued
For the Year Ended 31 March 2026

23. PENSIONS (Continued)

Changes in the fair value of the pension scheme assets were as follows:

	2026	2025
	£'000	£'000
Fair value of scheme assets at 01 April 2025	10,557	11,103
Interest income	614	546
Actual return on scheme assets (excluding interest income)	55	(953)
Employer pension deficit repair payment	256	250
Benefits paid to members	(568)	(389)
Fair value of scheme assets at 31 March 2026	10,914	10,557

Changes in the defined benefit obligations were as follows:

	2026	2025
	£'000	£'000
Present value of defined benefit obligations at 1 April 2025	(10,737)	(11,690)
Interest cost on liabilities	(617)	(569)
Benefits paid	568	389
Actuarial gain/(loss)	141	1,133
Present value of defined benefit obligations at 31 March 2026	(10,645)	(10,737)

The amount of each major class of pension scheme assets within the total fair value of the scheme assets was as follows:

	2026	2025
	£'000	£'000
Equities	3,833	3,298
Bonds	6,815	6,689
Annuities	110	115
Cash	156	455
	10,914	10,557

The total return on scheme assets was as follows:

	2026	2025
	£'000	£'000
Interest income	614	546
Actual return on scheme assets (excluding interest income)	55	(953)
Total return on scheme assets	669	(407)

The principal actuarial assumptions used were as follows:

	2026	2025
Discount rate	6.20%	5.90%
Inflation assumption (RPI)	3.30%	3.25%
Inflation assumption (CPI)	2.90%	2.75%
Rate of increase for non-GMP pensions in deferment	2.90%	2.75%
Rate of increase for pensions in payment (RPI, min 3% max 5%)	3.70%	3.65%

Expected future lifetime from age 65:	2026 No of years	2025 No of years
Male – currently aged 65	22.0	21.5
Female – currently aged 65	23.9	23.6
Male – currently aged 45	23.5	23.1
Female – currently aged 45	25.0	24.8

Notes to the Consolidated Financial Statements - Continued
For the Year Ended 31 March 2026

23. PENSIONS (Continued)

The Scheme was in a funding surplus at the balance sheet date. However, the BTO has not recognised this surplus as an asset in the financial statements because it does not have an unconditional right to a refund of the surplus nor is it able to realise economic benefits from the surplus through reductions in future contributions. Accordingly, in accordance with the applicable accounting standards, the recoverable amount of the surplus has been assessed as nil and the pension asset has been fully derecognised.

The underlying actuarial surplus of £269k has therefore not been recognised on the balance sheet.

Birds Science People

British Trust for Ornithology
The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2PU
Tel: +44 (0)1842 750050 Web: www.bto.org
Email: info@bto.org Bluesky: btobirds.bsky.social
Registered Charity Number 216652 (England & Wales), SC039193 (Scotland)

Cover image: Gannet courtship, Noss, Sheltand, by David Tipling / birdphoto.co.uk