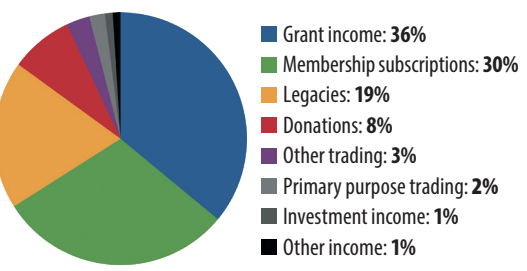




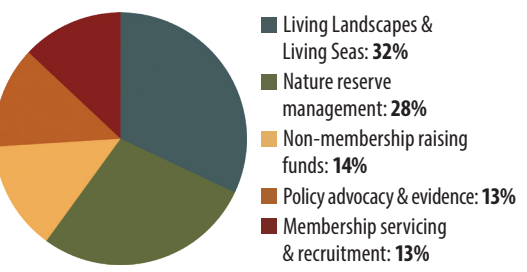
© James Burland/Dorset Wildlife Trust

Dorset Wildlife Trust Chief Executive, Brian Bleese, gives an overview of an unprecedented year and its stand-out moments.

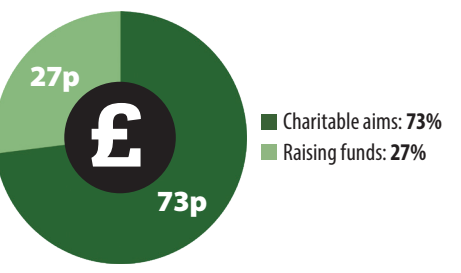
Income: £3.463 million



Expenditure: £2.700 million



For every £ spent



The full annual report and accounts can be found at: dorsetwildlifetrust.org.uk/what-we-do/about-us/how-we-are-run

The past 18 months have been hugely challenging for Dorset Wildlife Trust. During this time the support of members, volunteers, partner organisations, those who support wildlife through gifts in Wills or donating to an appeal, and our far-reaching online community, has been more vital than ever for keeping our work for Dorset's wildlife on track. Thank you all!

2020-21 was marked by two major events. First, the rise of the Covid-19 pandemic and its impacts on society and the economy. Second, and no less significant for long-term impact on the work of Dorset Wildlife Trust, is the realisation that the Wildlife Trusts movement needs to focus on addressing three major issues:

1. The Climate Emergency
2. The Ecological Emergency
3. The disconnect between people and nature.

The 2020-21 financial year began with optimism. We recognised that Dorset Wildlife Trust is, in many ways, at a crossroads. For the past 15-20 years we have built a solid financial and reputational platform to build on for the future. However, the social, political and economic environment is rapidly changing and Dorset Wildlife Trust must change too. This came into stark focus as we began to see the impacts of the pandemic at the end of March 2020.

Understandably, a lot of effort went into managing the impact of Covid-19 this year. An early assessment of the financial impact of Covid-19 on the Trust indicated a need to reduce structural costs

to balance an anticipated fall in income. We worked to establish a structure enabling Dorset Wildlife Trust to play a key role in addressing the climate and ecological crises, to rebuild and respond to new opportunities, to ensure that our work is achievable, affordable and appropriate and our resources are deployed to best effect. A development plan was put in place defining the Trust's strategic goals and establishing an affordable and sustainable structure to build on for the future. The requirement to reduce costs led to restructuring the team and, sadly, the loss of some posts through voluntary and compulsory redundancy. We received a welcome boost to our income in early 2021 with the receipt of a generous unrestricted legacy of £432,000 which, together with government support, has helped offset lost income in other areas. This enables us to move forward in a more secure position than we could possibly have envisaged at the beginning of the year.

Several projects and initiatives were delayed in 2020/21 but despite the disruption, staff have worked hard to maintain Dorset Wildlife Trust's impact, addressing the year's many challenges and even making considerable progress in many areas. Thank you again for your loyalty, support and patience during an extremely difficult time for all of us.

Brian
Brian Bleese
Chief Executive



© Amy Lewis

As part of the **Wild Brownsea** project, staff and volunteers on Brownsea Island have done a great job removing tonnes of redundant structures including old bird hides and the decrepit boardwalk. A new boardwalk has been installed, enabling people to enjoy the island's amazing wildlife without causing disturbance. Meanwhile, breeding birds on the lagoon have had a great year with 161 sandwich tern and 128 common tern chicks fledging alongside more than 200 black-headed gull chicks.



© James Burland/Dorset Wildlife Trust

Work was completed on the beaver trial site and **two beavers were successfully released** in February 2021. Baseline and ongoing data is now being collected for our scientific study into the impacts of the beavers, working closely with our partners, Exeter University and Wessex Water. We now have a rota of volunteer 'checkers' and a local vet who kindly pledged their services to the project for free. The beavers have settled in well and have already constructed several dams.

Building Nature Recovery Networks is vital for creating more space for wildlife and enabling it to adapt to climate change. To this end, **Dorset's Ecological Network maps were updated** this year. Following this, the Local Nature Partnership successfully led a bid (with partners) for Natural England funding to involve more partners and work towards a Local Nature Recovery Strategy. This included updating the Biodiversity Audit (led by DERC) and the Marine Biodiversity Audit (led by Dorset Wildlife Trust).



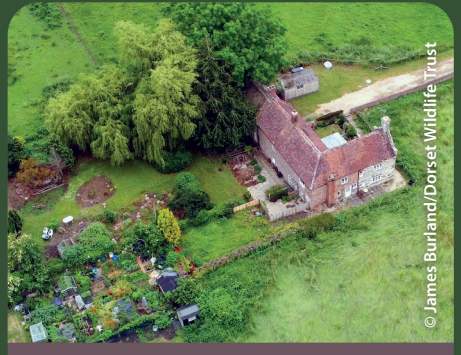
© Nick Dear

Nature reserve management faced its own challenges with increased visitor pressure stretching our resources at times. However, we **worked hard to keep our 42 nature reserves open for visitors**, while many other public spaces were closed, helping new people begin their journey of valuing and appreciating the benefits of connecting with nature.



© James Burland/DWT

The designation of **Kingcombe Meadows and Powerstock Common as Kingcombe National Nature Reserve**, finalised in July 2021, is a great tribute to those who have nurtured these wonderful sites over the years. Kingcombe National Nature Reserve gives us fantastic new opportunities to link with neighbouring farmers and landowners to support Nature Recovery Networks.



© James Burland/Dorset Wildlife Trust

We successfully secured over £3.1m to purchase **170ha of land near Bere Regis**, where we are now launching England's first large-scale community rewilding project. The land acquisition was completed shortly after the end of the financial year. You can read more about this pioneering project on page 18.



© Andy Rouse 2020/21

Our **barn owl webcam** provided a welcome dose of wildlife during lockdown. Two owlets had successfully fledged by the end of July 2020. We had over 440,000 views on the webcam page.

We are so grateful for **our brilliant members**, who stuck with us throughout 2020/21. We were and still are privileged to have the support of a powerful online community where wildlife photos, videos and stories were shared daily, bringing nature into our homes when we couldn't always access it in 'real life'. Quickly diversifying membership recruitment methods in the absence of face-to-face recruitment and investing in communication with our existing, loyal members led to an increase in the overall number of Dorset Wildlife Trust members. At the start of the financial year Dorset Wildlife Trust had 13,652 active memberships. At the end of March 2021 this number stood at 14,397.