



Alderney
Wildlife Trust

CEO's Report

AWT Members Meeting 2024

Introduction

In my 2023 report I focused on the AWT's plans for the future of the organisation. Key to this work was the development of the environmental baseline which informs and guides all the AWT's work and helps to ensure our actions are guided by science. Alongside the evidence base was the need to ensure Alderney's community is at the heart of our decision making.

To achieve these plans the AWT set three strategic campaigns, to run until 2030, through which all the AWT's work will be focused. These campaigns not only help to guide our work on Alderney, but they also align with the strategic goals of the British Wildlife Trusts' and provide a common thread which brings Alderney together with the other 45 Trust's, in our work to Protect, Study and Champion wildlife.

Over the course of the last 12 months these campaigns have taken route within the AWT and have helped provide us with a newfound clarity, which in turn has helped us reach outside of Alderney to secure new funding to support our work. In this report I have focused on these Strategic Campaigns and the Goals which lie within them.

Putting Nature into Recovery (PNiR) [Strategic Goal]

Alderney has, arguably, one of the highest levels of biodiversity, by area, of anywhere in the British Isles. Over the last 85 years Alderney has seen a significant decline in the use of its agricultural land, much of which was once rich in wildlife, and with this we have seen a subsequent loss of species and habitats. Alderney has also been faced with an increasing number of Invasive and non-native species, as well as new fungal, bacterial, and viral threats, all of which have also had a negative impact on biodiversity.

By 2030 the AWT is committing to work with our community, especially landowners, to halt this decline. To achieve this, we must establish limits of acceptable change for key habitats and species, agreed by the wider community, and based on sound ecological data. These limits can then be used to better understand how Alderney's natural environment is responding to the challenges it faces. Currently around 20% of Alderney's land area and 10% of its maritime waters receive some form of voluntary protection, but none of these areas have any form of legal protection.

Our Goal is to work towards ensuring that at least 30% of our island's environment is actively thriving and protected for its biodiversity. We will seek to do this through the following projects:

Alderney's State of Nature (ASoN) – In the Summer of 2023 we secured £137,000 worth of funding from the Social Investment Fund (SIF) in Guernsey to support the staffing and infrastructure of the ASoN project over 3 years. ASoN aims to monitor the health of our island's wildlife and establish an early detection system for threats such as the introduction of invasive non-native species (e.g., Asian Hornet) and new diseases and viruses (e.g., avian influenza, ash dieback). ASoN will be delivered through our Environmental Evidence Base, which includes the Living Seas Programme's Evidence Portal and by growing this Evidence Base we can also inform our actions and provide others, including government and our colleagues at the Alderney Animal Welfare (AAW) with the information necessary to

do this by establishing limits of acceptable change.

In late 2023 we started a programme of engagement with stakeholders and the latest phase of this is still [open to the public until the end of May 2024](#). The responses from this stakeholder process will be incorporated into the AsoN process alongside review of the evidence base itself. The output of evidence base and the established limits of acceptable change will be made through the Alderney Biodiversity Centre (ABC) and we will work in collaboration with the rest of the Channel Islands to develop best practice and secure common resources.

Key developments within the AsoN work in the last year include:

- The development of the Pan Channel Island's Record Centre website coming online before the end of 2024.
- Supporting SoA with the response to key invasive species including the newly discovered Australian Flatworm, as well as taking part in the Pan Channel Island's Invasives Species Working Group.
- Key species and habitats lists to be published by August 2024
- Key presentation to the Inter Island's Environment Meeting 2023.

Nature Reserves – The AWT maintains an area of approximately 130 hectares (ha) of land as 'nature reserves' which includes the Longis and Vau du Saou Nature Reserves and the Alderney Community Woodland (ACW). Despite these sites lacking legal protection, by working with landowners we have highlighted their importance as pockets of biodiversity. These green spaces are vital for the quality of life of residents and are a key resource for tourism.

Our strategic goal is, in collaboration with landowners and other Islanders, to ensure that at least 30% of our island's environment is actively thriving and protected for its biodiversity. In 2024 we have commenced a review of the existing management strategy for all of these sites. Based on this review, as well as input from independent experts such as Environment Guernsey, we are preparing a new combined management strategy for Alderney's nature reserves. This work has included extensive stakeholder engagement, centred on stakeholder and public questionnaires. There has been a positive response to this process with over 50 responses, many of which will directly inform the development of the new strategy.

Key developments within the Nature Reserves in the last year include:

- Review of land management carried out by the AWT on behalf of the States of Alderney, both on and off the nature reserves. This review has led to the signing of a new Service Level Agreement with the SoA which better lays out the support to be rendered and the value of remuneration.
- Investment in new cutting equipment to enable path maintenance.

Ramsar (International Important Marine Wetland) – Alderney's Ramsar site draws attention to the presence of nationally and internationally important breeding populations of seabirds and our rich and unique marine life. Guided by the Environmental Evidence Base we have assisted the States of Alderney in the management of the Ramsar site for nearly 20 years. In 2022 the arrival of avian influenza stressed how fragile these sites are. We lost nearly 30% of the island's gannet population, based on the 2023 census, reducing the population to its lowest level in nearly 40 years. Thankfully, though the disease did not disappear in 2023 it does not seem to have caused further harm to Alderney's seabirds.

Unfortunately, it appears the value of Alderney's Ramsar site to the island, both as a local resource and for the international recognition it brings, does not seem to have been accepted by all of the States of Alderney Members. In 2023 it became apparent that at least one member wanted to see the Ramsar site's boundaries changed to remove Burhou from the boundaries of the designation. The exact reasoning for this is not clear, and this desire does not seem to be supported by most other States Members. However the removal of part of the site containing regional and nationally important seabird populations would require Alderney to seek support from the UK

government, something the Island is unlikely to receive.

To try and better clarify the AWT's support for the SoA, in its due roles, the AWT has taken on a new staff role of Ramsar Support Officer, to carry out the majority of its survey and conservation work. At the same time the AWT has provided the SoA with a maximum of 300hrs of staff time from its lead consultant ecologist towards the Ramsar sites administration support. The AWT's support for the Ramsar site breaks down as follows:

- **An administrator on behalf of the government** - a service provided with no charge for staff time, and which was first requested by the SoA in July 2006, when the General Services Committee (GSC) 'RESOLVED unanimously to agree to the Alderney Wildlife Trust and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) to develop a Ramsar Site Management Plan...'. Subsequently the RSPB stood down from its administration role and took up a place on the Ramsar sites Scientific Advisory Group, whilst the AWT continued to support GSC, and the SoA's civil service' in the administration of the site in absence of other resources.
- **An activity organisation**, alongside other organisations including the Alderney Animal Welfare Society and the Channel Island Bird Ringers, the AWT has an interest in the understanding and protection of the wildlife within the Ramsar site. As such it invests a huge amount of time and resources into research, conservation actions and education within the site. Against work which has been agreed under the Ramsar site's strategic plan, and its annual action plans, activity organisations can recover costs of materials, but not staff time.

The 300hrs of administration time alone has a value to the SoA of over £18,000 (standard consultancy rate) and will continue to be provided free of staff costs.

Key developments within the Ramsar Site in the last year include:

- After several years of delays, brought about by both UK Govs limitations in processing updates from British Ramsar sites, the Alderney Ramsar Information Sheet (R.I.S) was finally formally accepted for review by the Department for Food Environment and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) in the UK. The R.I.S is the formal recording mechanism for Ramsar sites and therefore an important document. The initial version of which was completed with the support of the Societies Guernesiaise, Channel Island Bird Ringers, RSPB, UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum, Alderney Society and other esteemed naturalists. Whilst an update had been submitted it had not been formally registered, it is believed this shortfall was in part because of austerity cutbacks on DEFRA resources.
- Supporting the GSC in the updating of the Alderney Ramsar Advisory Group's (ARAG) Terms of Reference.
- Delivery of the 2023 Alderney Ramsar site Action Plan programme of works.

Alderney Community Action for Nature (ACAN) [Strategic Goal]

The AWT has created a support network of members and volunteers which is unrivalled across all 46 British Wildlife Trusts. Our membership currently includes approximately 20% of island residents. To achieve our goals, we need to focus on listening and understanding what our wider community needs from its natural environment. Through better understanding we can make a positive difference for wildlife by providing knowledge, power and resources to individuals, organisations and even businesses.

Our Goal by 2030 is to enable and support our community to act to preserve our environment, with at least 1 in 4 residents acting for nature (click for definition). As the ACAN programme has become embedded in the AWT's practices over the last year we have seen a significant growth in our ability to listen and respond to the thoughts and needs of our community:

Team Wilder – funded through the British Wildlife Trusts, the Team Wilder Community Officer position is focused on listening to our community's needs and establishing where these co-join our own. We recognise that Alderney is not a homogenous community of 2,000 residents, but rather a diverse series of interlocking sub-communities. These communities form around everything from social groupings, where people live, even activities (i.e. clubs,

societies) and can consist of just a few people to significant parts of our population.

Key developments within the Team Wilder in the last year include:

- stakeholder and public engagement across the island
- commencement of the Team Wilder Community Support programme which has included support for a micro-allotment programme and St. Anne's School
- delivery of two woodland explorer programmes for resident and visiting children

Nature's Classroom – since its founding the AWT has provided wildlife and nature-based activities for our island's educators, as well as its residents and visitors. We have created resources such as the Alderney Community Woodland with its classroom spaces, have provided staffing support to run nature-based learning (e.g. St. Anne's School), and have run a multitude of educational events and activities. The Nature's Classroom work has been heavily supported by the Sue Rouse Trust and Robin Whicker which has made it possible to divert more and more educational resource to support Alderney's residents.

Key developments within the Nature's Classroom in the last year include:

- creation of the Nature's Classroom programme which has including:
 - o production of an annual support programme for St. Anne's Nursery.
 - o development joint works with St. Anne's School.
 - o Expansion of AWT educational resources both online and in print.
- Provision of free boat trips for school age children to view the Island's Ramsar site.
- Support for children undertaking their Duke of Edinburgh awards trials.

Pollinator Project – The decline in pollinators across Europe also impacts Alderney. This evolving project focuses on providing our community with the tools to help prevent the loss of this vital group of invertebrates. For Alderney to have a sustainable future, the role pollinators play in the production of crops, the prevention of erosion and as part of a balanced food chain, cannot be undervalued.

Key developments within the Pollinator Project in the last year include:

- Expansion of the Pollinator Project in collaboration with Alderney Roots; including the creation of new pollinator raise beds next to the airport road.
- Expansion of pollinator seed expansion to pass out 242 free 1m2 native wild seed packets to Alderney's residents.
- Working with the SoA's Agriculture Team in the management of Alderney's grasslands. This work has included providing technical support on request. However, we have also been learning from the SoA's Team who have developed a unique, and very popular new management techniques for rotating wildflower grassland sites within areas of public grassland.
- Hosting a joint internship between the AWT and Alderney Animal Welfare Society with a student from Harper Adams University. Amy's project looking at the impacts of irritants on pets will help inform our management of paths and hopefully reduce the risk to especially dogs walking on the island's green spaces.

Nature Is the Solution (NITS) [Strategic Goal]

The AWT recognises that we must work with others to preserve and restore our natural ecosystems at an island scale, not just as small pockets of habitat within nature reserves. Alderney's natural environment provides us with the mechanisms (Nature Based Services) to respond to the challenges our community faces, be that in the sequestering of carbon, the role of healthy soils in food production, the importance of native species in the prevention of erosion, the provision of pollination services, or its value to people's physical and mental wellbeing.

If Alderney is to thrive in a sustainable way, with an environment still rich in biodiversity, we must consider how these mechanisms provided by our natural environment enable us to meet the challenges of remote island life. Our Goal is by 2030 is to establish the value and role of Nature Based Services here on Alderney and integrate this into our ASON and ACAN programmes and ensure they are understood and valued by our community.

Alderney Sustainability Hub (ASH) – We have operated the site known as Essex Farm for 17 years. It has become a focal point for the community providing an events space, a center for our WVs and our conservation efforts. It already incorporates accommodation for interns, a hostel space for visiting researchers, as well as a workspace for creating educational materials (e.g. bird boxes, touch tanks, wormeries, composting) and amenity equipment (e.g. benches and stiles). In 2020 we committed to reducing our carbon contribution to net zero by 2030. Since then, we have been working to reduce and replace the use of fossil fuels and integrate more renewable energy into our operations. We began discussions with Alderney Electricity (AEL) in 2021 about the installation of into grid solar at this site. In 2022/23 the SoA started the process of developing and approving an Energy Policy for Alderney which it is hoped will enable Alderney's future progression towards renewables.

In collaboration with the property owner and AEL, we are working to develop the ASH. This will see the Essex Farm site transformed over the course of 3-5 years to become a centre of sustainability for our island with a focus on sustainable growing/horticulture, the development of key on island skills and the integration of renewable energy.

Go Green – We have focused on sustainable/green practices on Alderney for many years including composting, water conservation and the reduction of single-use plastics.

In 2023/24 we have been focused on developing the **Alderney Waste to Food (AWTF) Project** – Established thanks to the support of Fort Group is being developed with Alderney Roots, The Georgian House and Jack's Brasserie. The project is trailing the potential for in-vessel composting in the management of food waste, invasive species green waste. Producing useful, safe compost which can be used on island, reducing the need for import of materials.

Other Key areas

Whilst the AWT is focused on delivering its campaign goals there is a constant effort to secure funding and develop/retain staff in order for it be able to deliver these commitments. The following key areas deserve a special mention for the developments over the last 12 months:

Staffing

Thanks to the funding secured from the AWT's consultancy, AWT Enterprises, in its work with the States of Alderney and other private business, as well as income from grant makers such as SIF, RSWT and the Sue Rouse Trust, as well as donors including Charles Asprey and Robin Whicker amongst others, the AWT has managed to secure five and a half paid staff positions, and 5 full time intern positions.

Whilst this brings in vital skills and strengths it has significantly increased the administration workload and once again this

has largely fallen on the shoulders of Lindsay Pyne who has, as always been incredible in her commitment to the organisation. It was therefore an absolute pleasure to hear that Lindsay had been awarded the Marsh Award for volunteer excellence as assessed across the whole of the Wildlife Trusts.

Vehicles

Thanks to the support of Charles Asprey and some residual funding from RSWT the Trust was able to upgrade its small fleet of vehicles adding another electric car and a smaller SUV to replace its aging truck. These vehicles not only bring increase reliability but are expected to reduce fuel consumption costs by as much as 30% in the coming years.

Membership

The AWT reviewed its membership benefits as part of the 2024 Business Plan and:

- Increased the cost of walks and tours generally from £7 adults to £10 adults in response to the cost-of-living increase in 2023 and the fact that costs had been frozen for some time. Alongside this rise was a commitment to increase the discount offered to members taking part in events from 20% to 50% (accept on boat trips).
- Reached partnership agreements with:
 - o Georgian House Hotel to offer a 4 for the price of 3 discount for members on rooms at the Georgian and Victoria
 - o Cycle and Surf to offer a 20% discount on day rates for electric bikes.
- Took part in the May 2024 Seafront Sunday Shutdown in St. Peter Port Guernsey to help both market the island and get more people interested in Alderney's Wildlife and being a AWT member. Given the success of this event we will be looking at taking part in at least one more of these events in 2024.

The new membership offer has seen an increase in subscriptions in the 10 days since its launch and we are looking to expand the partnership agreements with at least one or two more offers in 2024. These offers are open to existing members of the AWT.

Legacies

The AWT has benefitted from Legacies over the years but has not had a dedicated legacies programme. As it is now in its 22-year part of its new Fundraising Plan was to create a strategy for informing AWT members, and residents more generally, of the huge potential that legacies have for generating benefits on Alderney. This strategy has been focused through:

- Establishing a new Legacies page on the AWT's website and becoming a partner in the RSWT legacies group.
- Develop a partnership with other local charities to develop a legacies day on Alderney to support peoples understanding of how to update their wills to enable a legacy.

Conclusion

I hope the members can see how the AWT is evolving to meet the challenges facing our island and its environment. I would like to express my profound thanks and gratitude to the Board, staff, volunteers, and members for all they have done over the last year. Here is to a year of achievements in 2024.

Roland Gauvain
Manager, Alderney Wildlife Trust
27th May 2024