

Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust
AGM and Conference – 24 October 2019
LAUNCH OF WILDER 2030 – Debbie Tann, CEO Speech

I probably don't need to say this to the people in the room – you already know that our wildlife is in trouble. But I'm going to stress it anyway, our wildlife is in freefall, our seas are full of plastic, our rivers are struggling, our climate is breaking down. We are facing an environmental crisis.

Sir David Attenborough recently said : “We all live on the same planet and we are dependent on it for every mouthful of food we eat and every breath of air we take. Human influence on the planet is everywhere. We have made a tragic, desperate mess of our environment – our home.”

We know this to be true and yet until recently the environment remained firmly a niche issue – a minority concern.

This sense of the environmental crisis looming drove us to launch our Wilder #1 discussion paper last year.

In it, we set out scale of challenge – asked questions – suggested what might be needed to put nature into recovery

We engaged with thousands of people – they filled in questionnaires, emailed us and came to events – we discussed and debated...

We talked to MPs, businesses, schools, universities, other organisations, farmers, families; lots and lots of people. We were bowled over by the response.

- People agreed with us that we needed a wilder Hampshire and Isle of Wight.
- People wanted the Trust to step up and do more. (particularly around influencing policy, working with farmers, achieving net gain in development, and large rewilding projects)
- People wanted to take action themselves in their homes, workplaces and communities – and wanted the Trust to help them.
- People wanted the government and businesses to act.

Although in our discussions we all agreed more needs to be done, it was (and is) important not to dismiss what we've achieved together in the past 50 years. If it wasn't for your support over the past half a century, things would be much worse for wildlife.

We have safeguarded the most precious places and restored others.

We've campaigned well and won a few battles.

We've built a solid and growing foundation of support.

We have learned what works, we know what to do.

As we spoke to people during the year, we explored what we felt nature needed now and in the future.

We boiled it down to three things:

1. **More people acting in support of nature**
2. **More space where nature could be restored**
3. **The pressure on the environment reduced everywhere, every day.**

We also talked a lot about **connections** – and networks. It's a simple concept that makes sense for both people and wildlife.

People need networks socially and economically. We couldn't survive without our networks – our connections to each other, and to all the things we need in life. Connecting with each other, and with nature is vital – for our health, wellbeing – everything.

Nature needs networks too. Nature has been squeezed into smaller and more isolated spaces, and squeezed out of our lives. But wildlife needs bigger better more and joined up places in order to thrive.

Nature needs **more space** and it needs to be connected.

The 'Nature Recovery Network' is a central plank of our strategy – our approach

I'll let Sir David explain more

PLAY FILM – ATTENBOROUGH NATURE RECOVERY NETWORKS FILM –

“everything works better when it's connected”

So the concept of a Nature Recovery Network is vital – and we have been calling on the government to put this into legislation – to make it mandatory. Thank you if you have contacted your MP about this over the last year.

We have seen the recent Environment Bill does contain some of what we've been asking for, but we cannot be complacent. It is all to play for and there is no guarantee the Bill will survive given the turbulent political situation. We need to keep up the pressure.

So today, I'll explain our plan – shaped by our experience and your input over the last year.

And – throughout the rest of this conference, we will aim to bring it to life with the help of our speakers, and through the discussions in our sessions after lunch.

Our vision for Hampshire and Isle of Wight is simple

We need to create a much **wilder future** – we need to put **nature into recovery**.

- We want nature's recovery to be at the forefront of tackling the climate crisis
- We want broken ecosystems to be restored and missing wildlife to return
- We want people to benefit from a healthy natural environment

To do this – we need ...

More people on nature's side, and

More space for wildlife to thrive

We have thought about the ideas of “more people and more space” a lot

→ By more people we mean **1 in 4** of the population acting in support of nature –25%

→ By more space we mean **a third** of our land and sea where nature is recovering – that means roughly **trebling** the amount of land that is currently prioritised for wildlife in our counties

→ And not forgetting the need to reduce the pressure on nature everywhere, every day, through using precious resources more sustainably and stopping damaging practices.

MORE PEOPLE ON NATURE'S SIDE

Why 1 in 4?

Social science research suggests that once 25% of people start demonstrating behaviours and actions, doing things, regularly, then this is enough to change the minds of the majority. It's about what's seen as normal. We need to normalise environmentalism.

In our plan we are calling for 1 in 4 people to act. Is this possible? This sounds a lot but this about creating momentum. A positive tipping point where everyday actions for nature become totally normal. Where behaviours are shifting.

Where – because of social pressures – we have strong laws and policies in place to reverse environmental destruction and put nature on the path to recovery.

Mobilising 1 in 4 people to act for nature will tip the balance.

It's true that you don't need that many to push for laws to change, to campaign, to protest. You don't need that many for the media to notice, for MPs to respond.

We've seen that with the school strikes and extinction rebellion.

But you do need that many for something to become culturally normalised. Socially acceptable. We are not there yet. Not enough people are there yet.

Awareness is high – 80-90% of people say they care about the environment or are worried. But very few have changed their behaviour or taken any action. There is a big gap between awareness and change. The value – action gap. We will discuss this later.

We need more people connecting with nature, building a movement, joining together with like minded folk – taking action for nature locally, and using the momentum to push for change nationally.

We are not saying the environmental crisis can be totally solved by individual action. In fact, asking individuals to bear the burden of solving these issues wrongly shifts the responsibility from those who are meant to protect (i.e. governments) to those who are meant to be protected (the people.)

We need to hold governments to their responsibilities, and this includes passing strong legislation. This is important. Globally just 25 mega-corporations and state-owned entities have been responsible for more than half of global industrial emissions since 1988. System change is needed.

Mobilising 1 in 4 people to act for nature will tip the balance.

With 1 in 4 acting for nature, the other 3/4 will eventually follow, either because they've been persuaded or because they have to if the rules change.

So this is why we want to create Team Wilder.

A network of people acting in support of nature.

Demonstrating change and pushing for change.

People connecting around shared passions and interests.

Making nature normal. Making environmentalism normal.

Not just the preserve of the tree hugger or science geek, but everybody.

Being part of our movement will make a lasting difference. It will tip the balance.

It's also one of the best ways of tackling eco-anxiety. Doing something really helps.

We hope that everyone in this room is the start of our 1 in 4. You are Team Wilder.

MORE SPACE FOR WILDLIFE TO THRIVE

Why a third of land and sea?

When nature conservation started 100 years ago we focused on the rare because we thought the common would look after itself. We focused on protection.

But sadly that strategy hasn't worked.

Even common species are in trouble now – and due to shifting baseline syndrome we have become used to a degraded environment.

We need to move from protection to restoration.

We need to restore natural processes and think about bio-abundance.

We need to focus on rebuilding whole, functioning ecosystems and kick start the recovery of abundant wildlife.

We have mapped out where the wildlife is in our two counties – and where it could be restored and connected. An ecological network map.

Our existing places for wildlife – where nature is the priority – accounts for around 11%. Much too small and not enough. Trust nature reserves are only 1%. But the ecological map shows that up to 50% or half of our land has potential for recovery.

Farmland takes up a massive three-quarters of our land surface. As an example, if just 10% of all farmland was made wilder that would be the equivalent of 7 times as much land as the Trust nature reserves.

The **public estate** – that's land owned by government organisations and councils – takes up around 15% of our counties. If just 20% of that was made wilder that would add another 12,000 hectares of space for nature.

These two alone would almost **double** what we have now.

Add to this the thousands of gardens, parks, school grounds and community spaces and it starts to add up.

Add to this land restored through the planning system – “**net gain**” is the jargon. As I mentioned earlier this is set to become a requirement for developments in the new Environment Act.

Add to this land restored for climate change reasons – **natural climate solutions** such as creating new woodlands or restoring salt marshes to absorb carbon from the atmosphere.

Add to this land restored to help reduce **pressure on the environment** such as converting arable land in sensitive areas to stop chemicals and soil polluting our rivers and seas.

Add to this the Trust’s aspirations to **buy more land** and double the space we own for wildlife.

There are many mechanisms for changing land use in favour of nature.

There is plenty of space, but it requires a radical re-think of what we use our land for – and how we value it.

We need to move away from only thinking about short term economic returns to thinking about long term investment in natural capital.

Nature is an asset not a liability. It’s an investment not a cost.

We know that the space nature has now is not enough. We know that it needs to be bigger and more connected. We can see from our mapping work that there is potential to restore and rewild large areas of our counties.

But it is also important to remember that the nature recovery network is not just about large areas. It can be anything from large rewilding projects to area of farms to new nature reserves to parks gardens and everything in between.

To quote Sir David again “Every space must be used to help wildlife”

We know that we need to take the pressure off nature everywhere and every day.

Restoring soils through regenerative farming and reducing pesticides is just one example – we will hear more about this later.

We know that in the sea, marine wildlife can bounce back if the pressure is taken off.

Internationally the IUCN has recommended and called for 30% of seas to be protected around the world and we see no reason why this target should not be emulated locally.

We already have marine designations protecting 25% of our local seas. Protection is just the start though, and proper management is now needed to allow these areas to recover. Just as on land, we also need the pressure reduced everywhere, and this means we need to find ways of using our seas far more sustainably than we do today.

So, these two concepts form the framework for our plan – and our flagship programmes – which I am delighted to formally launch today

More people on nature's side: TEAM WILDER

Today we formally launch our Team Wilder programme

Within this,

1. We are calling for 1 in 4 people to act in support of nature. We want people to step forward to create wilder streets and wilder communities.
2. We will offer a programme of training and support for people who want to be campaigners or leaders in their fields, workplaces or communities.
3. We will support young champions and give young people a voice, through the establishment of a youth council.
4. We will work with farmers and businesses leading action for nature's recovery.
5. We will continue to give people opportunities to experience wildlife and the natural environment and we will build **connection** to nature into all the work that we do.
6. We will expand our education and learning programme to reach through schools and children to families and communities.

7. We will create new opportunities for people to financially support wildlife in ways that fit with different lifestyles and priorities – from supporting specific places, giving time or funding our programmes.
8. We will double the Trust's membership over the next ten years, harnessing this vital support to drive our work forwards.
9. We will establish an annual event, the Wilder Hampshire & Isle of Wight Awards, bringing people together from across the counties to showcase and celebrate those making a difference for wildlife and the environment.

More space for nature to thrive: WILDER LAND & SEA

Today we formally launch our Wilder Land and Sea programme

Within this,

1. We will push for a strong and ambitious Environment Act with nature's recovery at its heart, together with an independent, well-resourced watchdog.
2. We will call for the space for wildlife to be trebled in our counties; we will double the land that we own and create new nature reserves.
3. We will challenge public bodies to recognise the nature emergency alongside the climate emergency, and harness the potential of the public estate for nature's recovery.

4. We will ensure that nature-based solutions are at the heart of plans to tackle the climate crisis.
5. We will seek out opportunities to deliver large-scale re-wilding projects, with a focus on restoring whole ecosystems and building abundance at every level. We will identify opportunities to reinstate wildlife species we have lost, including essential ecosystem engineers, such as beavers.
6. We will expand our work with farmers and landowners, identifying new and effective ways to deliver benefits for nature, society and farming. We will recognise and celebrate those that are leading the way through an annual Farming with Nature award.
7. We will offer new services to help planners and developers deliver 'net gain' for wildlife, and we will challenge policies, plans or proposed developments that fall short.
8. We will train and support community campaigners to be the voice of wildlife in their local area and hold authorities to account.

And in terms of Wilder seas

1. We will push for good management plans for marine protected areas and for action to rehabilitate vital marine habitats.
2. We will press for the best management of our fisheries and support their sustainable future.

3. We will undertake innovative 'blue carbon' projects with partners – enabling investment in marine habitats as a nature-based climate solution.

I also want to announce the Trust's ambition to not only become a net zero organisation when it comes to our carbon footprint, but a **net positive** one – by 2030 or earlier.

And finally

Why 2030?

This decade is a defining one.

It is widely agreed that decisions and actions taken in the next ten years will affect the next thousand years. We are at a tipping point.

We are the first generation to fully understand the state of nature, and the last that can do anything about it.

The time is now – we don't need more evidence, we don't need to wait, we can't, we need to act now.

I hope that you will be part of Team Wilder, and help us create a wilder future for our two counties.

Over lunch perhaps you could think about your role, how you can help, and make a pledge and add it to our pledge tree.

Thank you.