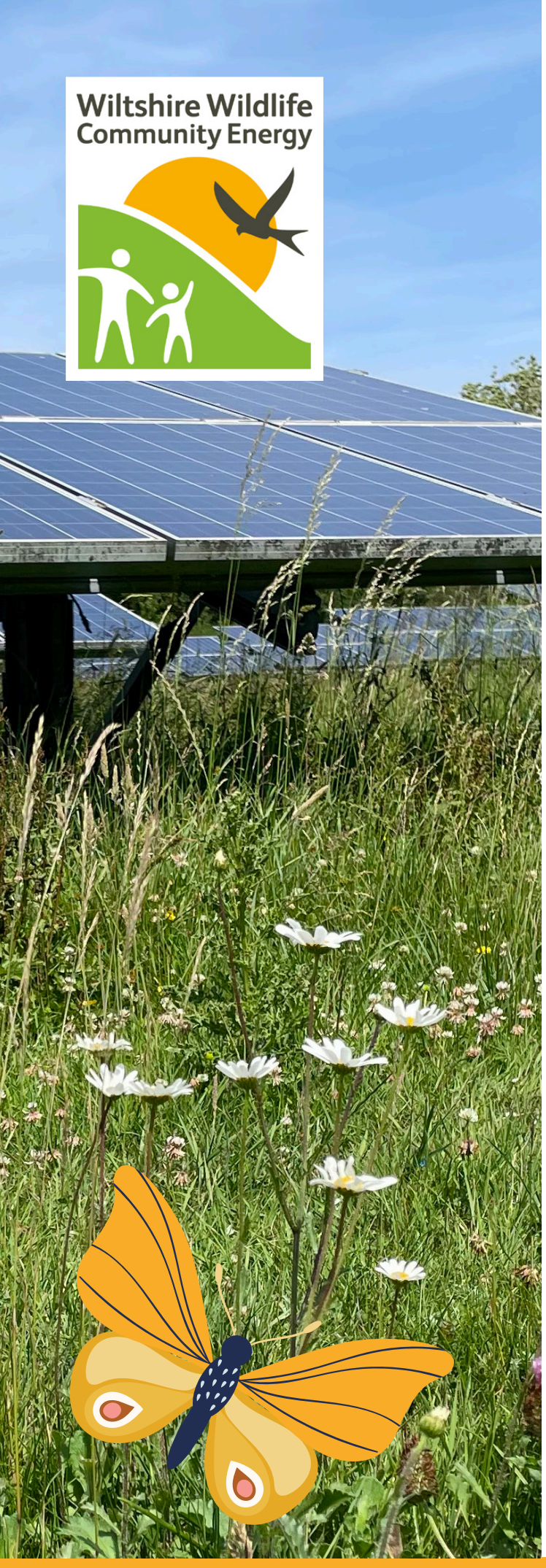
Wiltshire Wildlife Community Energy

ANNUAL REPORT 2025



• LESS CARBON, MORE WILDLIFE •



ANNUAL REPORT 2025

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NOTE FROM THE CHAIR

What a year it's been for Wiltshire Wildlife Community Energy! Never has our commitment to our ethos of promoting nature and reducing carbon in Wiltshire been more evident. We have maintained a maximum 7% return for investors, launched our first new solar array in ten years, gifted £40,000 to our Community Fund in support of worthy eco schemes and granted £100,000 to our sister organisation, the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust (WWT) to help nurture nature, as well as continuing to fund our 'Keeping Warm This Winter' energy advice initiative.

I must begin by celebrating the enormous success of our exciting Solar for Silverwood School share offer - the first public share offer from WWCE for more than a decade. A programme of public engagement, coupled with the efforts of our fundraising platform, Ethex enabled us to raise a substantial £500,000 from some 200-plus climate-conscious investors before its close earlier this year. Doing so meant we were able to bring over 1,000 solar panels on the rooftops of the Devizes school into community ownership, guaranteeing a supply of clean energy at affordable prices for the school, and securing a ring-fenced bespoke community fund to support the delivery of environmental initiatives in partnership with the faculty. This site is a valuable addition to our portfolio and further cements our commitment to solar and to the wider community.

Outside of our commercial endeavours, we also remain committed to the continuation of our Keeping Warm This Winter programme, conceived and delivered by carbon reduction champion, Jessica Thimbleby.



Julian Barlow, Chair of Wiltshire Wildlife Community Energy

7%

MAXIMUM RETURN FOR INVESTORS MAINTAINED (FROM 2024)



In its third year the scheme proved to be as important as ever and I am delighted that she was able to help a further 240 of the region's most vulnerable people through the challenging winter months. Clearly, the project provides important help and support to struggling households and we look forward to bringing it back for 2025.

Elsewhere, our promising financial performance meant we were able to maintain returns for existing investors at the maximum of 7% and continue to provide an enhanced level of funding to our Community Fund. The board was only too pleased to commit to a sizeable £40,000 contribution again this year, allowing more climate and nature friendly projects to become a reality.

It also meant that we could support other local schemes. This culminated in the decision to provide our largest ever grant to a single organisation - £100,000 spread over two years aimed at supporting the transformation of Wiltshire Wildlife Trust's Lower Moor Farm nature reserve.

This is the first project of its kind for WWCE and extends our reach beyond the borders of our Chelworth and Braydon sites, where our own land management practices continue to yield positive results. It's a pleasure to see wildflower meadow species flourishing at Chelworth and plans in motion to increase biodiversity at Braydon.

Let me finish by thanking our wonderful board, who continue to support this organisation entirely voluntarily and without whom we simply could not operate. I'd also like to acknowledge the hard work of our carbon reduction champion and the team at Communities for Renewables who have been instrumental in helping us achieve the success we've seen this year. Finally, I'd like to thank all our stakeholders, old and new, who place their trust in us and affirm our belief that the work we do benefits both planet and people in equal measure. Our mission to foster nature and reduce carbon in Wiltshire underpins all we do and has proved a very effective maxim by which we operate. Long may it continue.

£500K

RAISED BY OVER 200 INVESTORS



FINANCIAL REPORTING

WWCE is pleased to report good financial performance for the group, which is now in its ninth full year of operation, for the year ending 31st March 2025.

- **The combined group revenue of £1,806k** (2024: 1,256k) is a 48% increase on last year.
- **Cost of sales increased by £10k to £25k.**
- **Administrative costs are 9% up at £667k** (2024: £612k).
- **The profit before tax of £768k** (2024: £275k) is an improvement of £493k on the prior year.
- **Interest charges across the group at £348k** (2024: £356k), are 2% down due to reducing capital balances.

The strong performance of the group in the 2024/25 financial year is due to improved prices received for energy generated and exported. The average value of electricity sold to the grid by Braydon in the 2023/24 financial year was c.£70/MWh. In 2024/25 this increased to c.£245/MWh on average. Because of these high PPA prices and positive results, the group continues to be cash generative.

With continued strong fiscal performance, the group's focus remains on its mission of delivering 'less carbon, more wildlife' through contributions to the Community Fund and by driving new suitably aligned initiatives. In doing so, the positive performance of the group can be felt in the wider community, benefiting people and nature alike. Alongside this, we hope to maintain the 7% interest payment to members going forwards.

COMBINED GROUP REVENUE INCREASE:

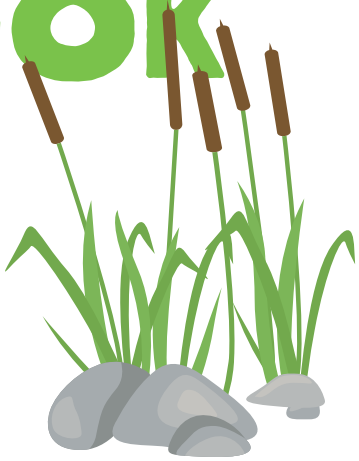
48%

£1,806K (2024: £1,256K)

PRE-TAX PROFIT:

£768K

2024: £275K





SOLAR FOR SILVERWOOD SCHOOL

This year saw WWCE launch its first share offer for more than a decade, enabling the organisation to bring 1,087 solar panels on the rooftops of Silverwood School under community ownership.

The co-educational special school caters for children and young people aged 4 to 19 years with diverse needs. It has recently benefitted from a £38 million investment from Wiltshire Council into its Rowde campus, delivering a state-of-the-art centre dedicated to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) education, health, care, and training. As part of the scheme, a 521kWp rooftop solar development was commissioned, offering WWCE a unique opportunity to partner with the school.

We were able to raise an impressive £500,000 thanks to over 200 climate-conscious investors, whose far sighted support enabled us to fund the array which will now guarantee a supply of clean, green energy at an affordable, predictable rate for the school. WWCE also aims to make an annual contribution of £5,000 to a ring-fenced community fund, designed to develop and support the delivery of environmental education initiatives for its students.

The Silverwood School project embodies what can be achieved when people come together with purpose, reducing the school's reliance on fossil fuels, cutting its energy costs, and providing long-term environmental and educational benefits. We're incredibly grateful to each and every investor, whose support brought this project to fruition. If you would like to get involved and join the dedicated community fund panel, please get in touch with the team at info@wwce.org.

"Our partnership with WWCE, supported by other stakeholders, is helping us benefit from a reliable supply of clean solar electricity generated onsite at our new campus for children and young people with SEND. Over time, the project will also contribute vital funds to support ecological initiatives that enrich our educational offer and reflect our commitment to sustainability."

SEAN MCKEOWN,
EXECUTIVE HEADTEACHER, SILVERWOOD SCHOOL

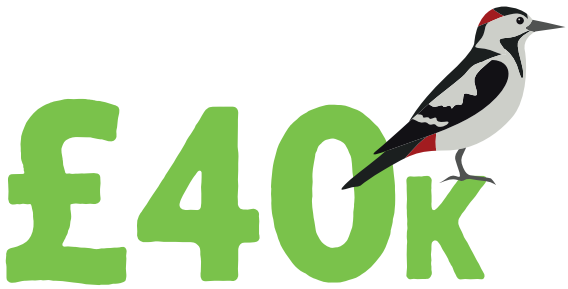
COMMUNITY FUND

The Community Fund selects initiatives that share its objectives of protecting wildlife, mitigating climate change, reducing carbon emissions or tackling fuel poverty. It continues to grow its portfolio with a further eight projects receiving funding in the year to 31st March 2025, as well as completing a number of ongoing schemes. Since then, five more projects have been financed, and a number of new applications are due for consideration at our next panel meeting. A one-off grant of £5,000 has also been agreed to kickstart our Silverwood School fund while it begins to generate its own reserves.

PROJECTS

Following member approval, the Community Fund received £40k from WWCE for 2024/25. As of 31st March 2025, it had delivered nearly £19,000 to eight projects, leaving a balance of some £20k available to finance successful applications submitted in the current financial year. The 2025/26 donation is subject to member approval at the upcoming AGM and will be drawn down upon receipt.

These awards bring the total disbursed by the WWCE Community Fund since 2014 to over £141k. An impressive and hugely impactful achievement!



RECEIVED FROM WWCE 2024/25

PROJECTS AWARDED GRANTS 2024/25:

- **Oliver Tomkins School** – to develop a student accessible wildlife area, Swindon
- **Broken Bridges Nature Reserve –** contribution to land acquisition for a nature reserve and purchase of equipment for wildlife education facilities, Salisbury
- **Sustainable Sherston –** for solar power generation at the local primary school, Sherston
- **Warminster Toad Patrol –** new information board and road closure campaigning, Warminster
- **Climate Friendly Bradford on Avon** – thermal imaging camera Bradford on Avon
- **Ivy Wildlife Garden** – maintenance of the shed/ garden/tools and wild bird feed, Chippenham
- **Churchfields the Village School** - outdoor learning area and wildlife garden, Monkton Farleigh
- **Salisbury Transition City** – sponsorship of fifth annual 'People in the Park' sustainability event, Salisbury

The remaining funding balance has subsequently been used to get those projects approved since April 2025 underway. Full details will feature in next year's reporting, but initiatives include wildlife conservation teaching spaces, solar energy generation to extend youth sports facilities and provide usable outdoor areas for local scouts and guides, and rainwater harvesting programmes.

£1,641

AWARDED TO:
IVY WILDLIFE GARDEN
DATE: WINTER 2024/25
STATUS: COMPLETE

£1,500

AWARDED TO:
CHURCHFIELDS THE VILLAGE SCHOOL
DATE: SUMMER 2025
STATUS: IN PROGRESS

£2,500

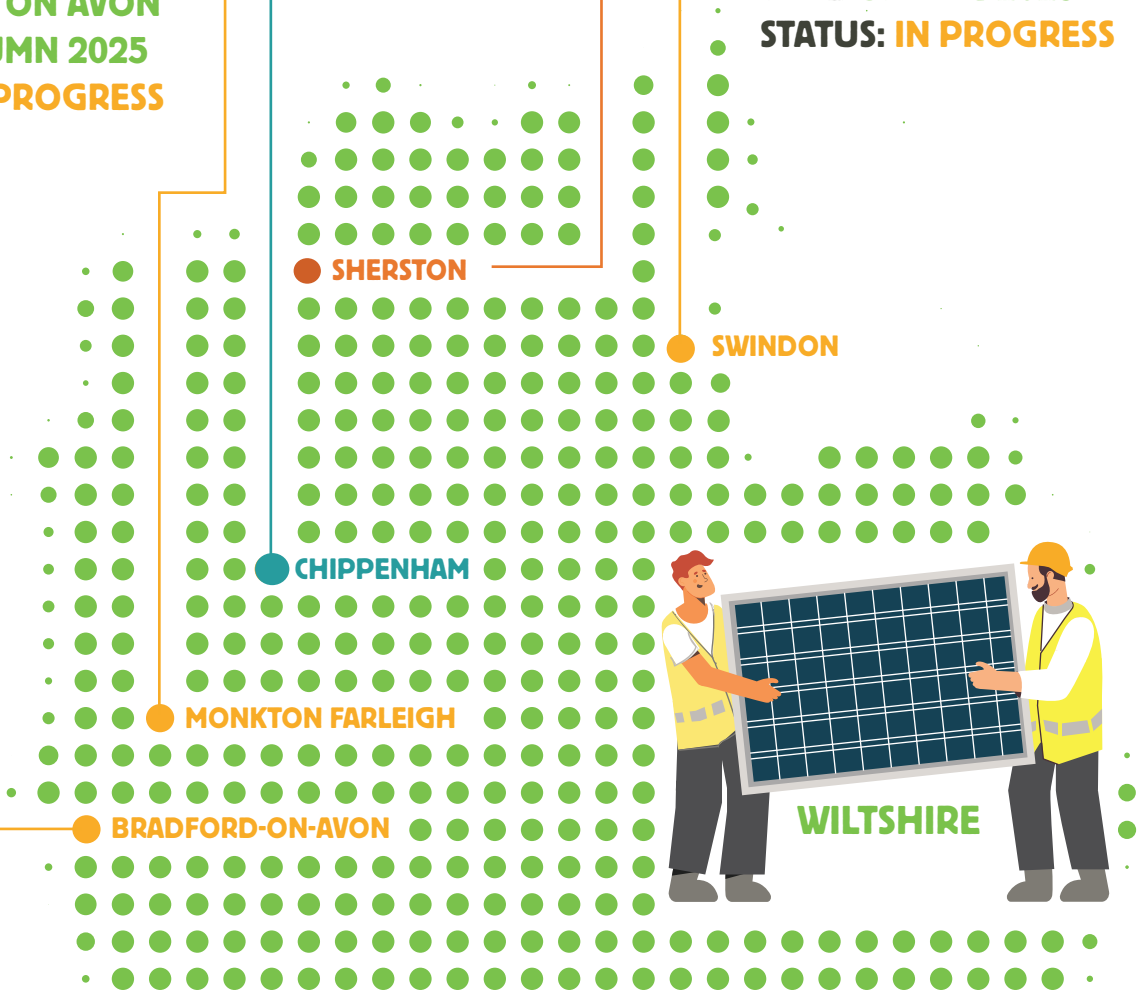
AWARDED TO:
SUSTAINABLE SHERSTON
DATE: AUTUMN 2025
STATUS: PENDING

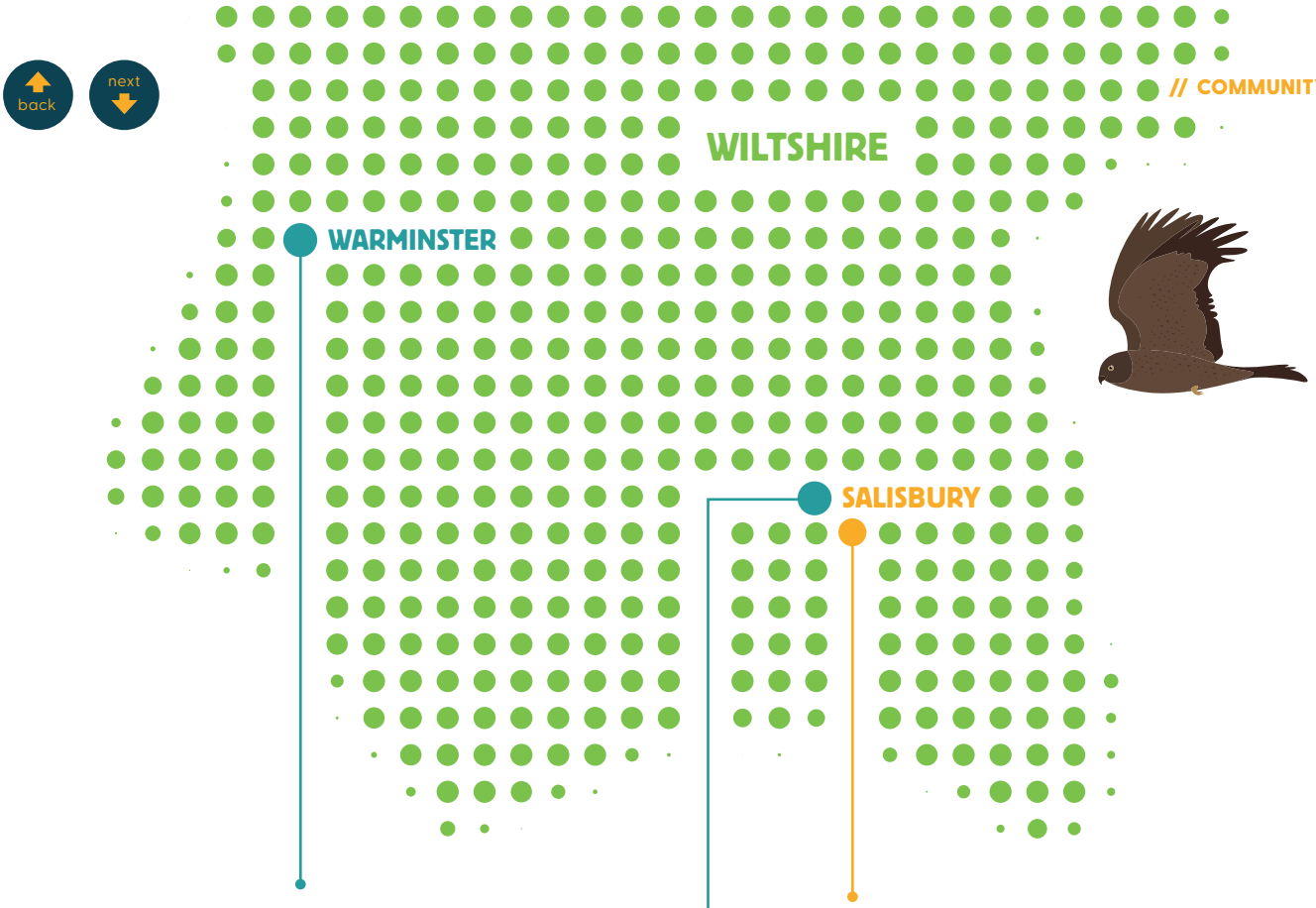
£350

AWARDED TO:
CLIMATE FRIENDLY BRADFORD ON AVON
DATE: AUTUMN 2025
STATUS: IN PROGRESS

£5,000

AWARDED TO:
OLIVER TOMKINS SCHOOL
DATE: SPRING 2025
STATUS: IN PROGRESS





£1,822

AWARDED TO:
WARMINSTER TOAD PATROL
DATE: AUTUMN 2024
STATUS: COMPLETE

£5,000

AWARDED TO:
BROKEN BRIDGES NATURE RESERVE
DATE: SUMMER 2025
STATUS: IN PROGRESS

£1,000

AWARDED TO:
SALISBURY TRANSITION CITY
DATE: SPRING 2025
STATUS: COMPLETE

The fund particularly welcomes requests for grants of under one thousand pounds which, although less substantial, are equally important in promoting carbon reduction, delivering environmental enhancements and driving community engagement across the county.

LOOKING AHEAD

We are keen to hear from new applicants for grants of up to £5k and our team is always pleased to offer guidance on criteria and process.

SUPPORTING THE COMMUNITY FUND

WWCE's Community Fund is chaired by one of our directors, Jon Bateman and managed by a panel of volunteers comprising members of WWT and WWCE, with financial and administrative supported provided by staff at the Trust. We were delighted to welcome Ali Nott, engagement manager in the Fundraising & Engagement Directorate at WWT to the fold this year.

Whilst processing grant applications and awarding grants are vital parts of the panel's role, they also actively promote the fund by reaching out to an increasing number of potential applicants and working with WWCE's external communications team to shape media releases and talk to press. In order to show our work off in the best possible light, we recently engaged a professional photographer to capture high quality imagery that will be used in case studies, on our website, and across social media.

The panel is also responsible for overseeing the fund's portfolio of ongoing and completed projects - building positive, lasting relationships to track progress and ensure grants are utilised as intended. Project oversight forms an increasingly important part of the panel's work, as the number of schemes benefitting from funding increases year-on-year. Last year, for example, the Community Fund had over a dozen live schemes taking place, all under the watchful eye of a nominated panel member.

With this in mind, I would like to take this opportunity to record WWCE's appreciation to all panel members who freely give their time and experience to support the Community Fund's work. I'd also like to thank WWT for their professionalism and commitment to seeing the fund succeed.

If you would like to be part of this changemaking line up, helping scores of climate and nature-friendly projects across Wiltshire come to life, we'd love to hear from you! We currently have vacancies for a new Community Fund panel member and later this year, we'll be seeking Silverwood investor members to oversee a dedicated Solar for Silverwood School fund.

So, whether you've been with us since the very beginning or are a recent investor, please contact Jessica Thimbleby JessicaT@wiltshirewildlife.org to learn more about how to become a member of our brilliant Community Fund panel!





LAND MANAGEMENT

The last year has seen a continuation of our work to support biodiversity and nature on our two largest solar sites. We've already seen some promising signs because of our changes to the management regime at Chelworth and have made plans to invest in wildlife at Braydon. We've also embarked upon on an exciting new partnership with the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust, supporting a fantastic project at its Lower Moor Farm nature reserve.

At Chelworth – the flock of sheep which have been grazing the site full-time for several years were taken off the solar park in the spring. By moving to a winter grazing regime and removing the sheep for spring and summer, we hope to encourage wildflowers and native grasses to flourish. Sheep will be brought back later in the year. Initial observations have yielded encouraging results, with several important wildflower meadow species identified, including ladies' bedstraw, bird's foot trefoil, ox-eye daisy, red clover and pepper saxifrage.

Unfortunately, in less positive news, our neighbours on the industrial estate removed a length of mature hedgerow on their land adjacent to the wildlife area without our knowledge. This has left it far more exposed to the elements and reduced valuable habitat. We will be planting a new hedgerow on our land later in the year to replace the losses, although this will take many years to establish.

At Braydon - we have been working with our operations contractors and specialist ecologists to identify areas for additional works to improve biodiversity across the solar park. This year will see the sowing of four marginal areas with seed sourced from Wiltshire Wildlife Trust's Avis Meadows; brush harvested just a few kilometres away. We'll also supplement this seed mix with Yellow Rattle - a hemi-parasitic wildflower which will naturally suppress grasses ensuring the new wildflowers have the greatest chance of success.

LOWER MOOR FARM

You may have already heard about the project on BBC Radio Wiltshire, seen our chair talking about it on regional broadcast channel, That's TV, or read about it in the local press. We are very excited to confirm a new nature restoration partnership with the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust (WWT) - the first initiative of its type since WWCE was founded.

WWCE has committed to providing a grant of £100,000 to WWT over the two-year scheme, part funding significant biodiversity and nature restoration enhancements on over 48-hectares of the Trust's 129-hectare Lower Moor Farm nature reserve. This is the largest grant WWCE has ever awarded to a single organisation and represents our dedication to protecting and enhancing wildlife habitats across the county.

The ambitious project will transform part of Lower Moor Farm into a dynamic mosaic of habitats by combining conservation with sustainable farming practices. The proposal uses conservation techniques that address multiple challenges simultaneously - increasing biodiversity, improving climate resilience in our landscapes, providing natural flood management, and demonstrating how traditional farming can evolve to support wildlife. Applying agroforestry techniques, including the creation of silvopasture roundels will dramatically boost the wildlife value of each field and ensure they can continue to be used as grazing pasture, not only supporting a healthy grazing herd but also significantly improving the welfare of individual animals. With increasing weather extremes, this will bring shade and shelter for wildlife and livestock into the middle of the field and provide a range of tree and shrub species to support a healthy diet for cattle and provide food and refuge for wildlife.

"We believe in the power of community-led action to restore nature and tackle the climate crisis, and this project represents an exciting opportunity to encourage a proliferation of species across our landscapes." **JULIAN BARLOW,** CHAIR

This reintroduction of wooded pasture and ponds and the opening up of part of the site to grazing will allow natural regeneration to occur, as will returning to a more wildlife-friendly form of management that was in place historically. With some match funding, the project will also deliver visitor infrastructure such as gates and paths to make this part of the site more attractive and accessible. We will keep members informed of progress with this major new project – a first for WWCE in supporting a major nature restoration initiative outside of our solar parks – as it progresses.

£100K PARTNERSHIP

Wiltshire Wildlife Trust



CARBON REDUCTION CHAMPION

This year, our Carbon Reduction Champion Jessica Thimbleby has been busy raising awareness of Wiltshire Wildlife Community Energy and promoting the brilliant community benefits the organisation provides. Jessica attended a number of events across the county on WWCE's behalf over the course of the year, publicising the Solar for Silverwood share offer and talking to potential Community Fund applicants. She's also linked in with Wiltshire Council's Climate Team as it endeavours to build connections with Wiltshire-based community energy groups, and continues to work closely with our partners at Wiltshire Wildlife Trust – creating opportunities to meet the shared aims of both organisations.

KEEPING WARM THIS WINTER 2024-25

Back for a third year, Jessica got on the road with WWCE's Keeping Warm This Winter programme to help more Wiltshire households struggling with high energy costs and energy inefficient buildings during the coldest season. Once again, the objectives were to raise awareness of and provide practical energy efficiency advice to low income, vulnerable households and to signpost people to caseworker support and available energy efficiency grants.

In autumn 2024, she kicked things off by joining WWT's Adult Wellbeing groups, visiting each of the five groups at their outdoor sessions to speak about affordable ways to keep warm and reduce energy costs. The pop-up energy cafes also returned to a number of foodbanks who were keen to engage more of their service users and repeat the success of winter 2023/24.



"Cold, damp, energy-inefficient homes are a fact of life for many on low incomes, and poor mental health is often linked to poverty. Participants on WWT Wellbeing programme had lots of questions for Jess about making their living spaces more comfortable on a low budget and appreciated the low energy light bulbs and room thermometers."

■ **ANDREA AND SUE,** WWT ADULT WELLBEING

This time round, however, most of the sessions were delivered in partnership with Carer Support Wiltshire, inspired by a successful event back in December 2022 at the Melksham Carers Café during WWCE's pilot project.

Over the course of 20 energy cafes, Jessica spoke to 240 people about a range of energy efficiency topics, the most common being draught-proofing; reducing damp, condensation and mould; and secondary glazing. She gave away the ever-popular WWCE room thermometer cards and LED light bulbs and was able to signpost 59 residents to the Warm and Safe Wiltshire service for further support with larger insulation measures and income maximisation and debt.

"Partnering with Wiltshire Wildlife Community Energy has been a fantastic experience. Their engaging talks at our carer cafes have made crucial energy advice and money-saving tips accessible right in the heart of our community. It's essential for carers, who often juggle numerous responsibilities, to receive the right information at the right time. This collaboration has provided a perfect platform to share invaluable advice, helping to prevent the overwhelming impact of high bills and energy overconsumption for our busy carers"

■ **POPPY CONNELL,** HEAD OF GRANT INITIATIVES AND SERVICE MANAGEMENT, CARER SUPPORT WILTSHIRE

The project drew the attention of local media, and of other community energy groups looking to replicate it. Jessica also shared her knowledge with several organisations, including Sustainable Warminster, who invited her to be part of their Energy Tea Party's over the winter months.

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KEEPING WARM INITIATIVE
Malmesbury Carers Cafe

Wiltshire Wildlife Community Energy

WE'VE REACHED

953 PEOPLE

ACROSS

54 SESSIONS

SINCE WE BEGAN IN DEC. '22

AT LEAST

57 PEOPLE

TOOK

ENERGY EFFICIENCY ACTION

AFTER SPEAKING TO US THIS WINTER

back

All of the directors at WWCE work entirely pro-bono and it is with great thanks we would like to recognise their outstanding and continuing contribution:

JULIAN BARLOW
Chair

LUCY NORMINGTON
Non-Executive Director and Community Fund Panellist

SYLVIA WYATT
Non-Executive Director and WWT Trustee

JONATHAN BATEMAN
Community Fund Committee Lead

DAVID LEWIN
Finance Lead

ROB GILLIES
Land Management Lead

Wiltshire Wildlife Community Energy

• LESS CARBON, MORE WILDLIFE •