



Kent
HIGH WEALD
protect / explore / enjoy

Kent High Weald Partnership

Annual Report

April 2024 – March 2025



Kent High Weald Partnership aims to connect people and nature through conservation, education, and wellbeing. Through our work we support the development of resilient communities and resilient ecosystems that mean people and wildlife can thrive together.

“No one will protect what they don’t care about; and no one will care about what they have never experienced.” (Sir David Attenborough)

Looking after our greenspaces, our nature, and our individual and community wellbeing has never felt so important. This is what the Kent High Weald Partnership works hard to do each year, to achieve the best outcomes for nature and people. And this year has been no exception. In 2024/5 our team of staff and volunteers have accomplished some amazing achievements in conservation, education, and wellbeing, with highlights summarized in the following pages. And we do this with limited resources – and by quadrupling our core funding through continuous grant seeking and income generating initiatives.

Why we do what we do...

The climate situation we face today is alarming – and it can feel overwhelming and far beyond our control. The work we do as a local organisation provides people with the opportunity to make a difference in one's own community and landscape. This can provide us with a much-needed sense of **hope and connection**– from planting a new tree, enjoying a cuppa with your fellow volunteers whilst admiring the steps you just built, harvesting a courgette on the community allotment that you grew from seed, or witnessing one your students who struggles in class, thrive in an outdoor setting. Moments like these are what we are all about!

Urban greenspaces protect communities from climate change impacts – they reduce the air temperature by 2C-8C and they reduce pollution by up to 22%. Therefore we must look after them. But also we need to ensure everyone in the community can access greenspaces to be able to enjoy, connect with, and understand nature and the important role these spaces play in all our lives and those of the future generations. That's why we have focussed this year on creating an access strategy and will continue to work on improving access to greenspaces and the High Weald Landscape in the coming years, all the while continuing to protect and enhance these beautiful natural places.



KHWP – Building Connections in Nature Since 1991!

Conservation Highlights

KHWP works to ensure our valuable local greenspaces are managed sustainably and sensitively to support biodiversity and community, and to mitigate against the impacts of climate change.

This year KHWP:

- ✓ Improved **over 30 sites/150 hectares** for biodiversity and people by **managing habitats and improving access** – including removing 1.5ha of invasive laurel at Sherwood Lake, building 44 steps at Snipe Woods, and carrying out 3 full site access audits.
- ✓ Delivered **109 volunteer tasks**, equal to an economic contribution of over **£110,000** of work hours.
- ✓ Supported Tunbridge Wells to win **13 South and South East in Bloom awards**
- ✓ Created and restored **6 ponds** to help provide habitat for great crested newts.
- ✓ **Surveyed 25 ponds** recently created and restored for great crested newts.
- ✓ Maintained **10 “leaky” dams**, providing natural flood defences.
- ✓ Installed **2 hibernaculum** at Snipe Woods for reptiles and amphibians
- ✓ Planted over **2500 trees** with the help of 4 schools, 30 community volunteers, 2 young offenders, and 65 staff from local businesses, TWBC and KCC.
- ✓ Hosted **200 attendees** to our **nature events** including guided bat walks, an archaeological walk, seasonal walks including the High Weald Walking Festival, and our volunteer walk and talk events.
- ✓ **Trained 38 volunteers** in species identification and surveying techniques covering flora, bees, birds, butterflies, reptiles, and dragonflies and damselflies.
- ✓ Co-hosted with TWBC a **thank-you event** and BBQ for over 50 volunteers.
- ✓ Hosted conservation tasks days for **6 corporate groups**
- ✓ Provided a **conservation traineeship** to a recent graduate and **work experience** to a secondary school student.



“I love working in the woodland at Sherwood Lake. Until I joined KHWP I didn't even know that this site existed, and I find it particularly beautiful and a very therapeutic space - great for my mental health. Also the camaraderie that exists among my fellow volunteers is very special” (Volunteer)

Education Highlights

Children are the future guardians of our natural world, and KHWP work to inspire, educate, train, and connect young people with nature. We also provide work experience and training for adults looking to learn new skills or progress their careers.

This year we have:

- ✓ Delivered **239 nature-based education** and **forest school** sessions to over **500 children**, and providing support for **7 different schools**.
- ✓ Provided forest school provision to **50 disadvantaged primary school children**, including special educational needs and English as additional language students.
- ✓ Supported **28 secondary school children with complex needs** with forest school programmes at Bedgebury Pinetum
- ✓ Delivered a Forest School programme to **28 pre-school children** at Barnetts Wood Local Nature Reserve
- ✓ Delivered **2 Forest School nurture programmes** to small groups of primary school children struggling with school and mental health challenges.
- ✓ Provided **Teambuilding activities** at Bedgebury for over **130 children**.
- ✓ Hosted **56 children** at our Bedgebury and Tunbridge Wells based **Forest School Holiday Day Camps**.
- ✓ **Trained over 60 people in new skills or qualifications** including Forest School leadership, chainsaw operation, improving accessibility, species ID and surveying, tree planting, and green woodwork.
- ✓ Provided **work experience** opportunities for young people and students.



“It is wonderful to see my daughter’s confidence grow. She has really come out of her shell.” (Forest Time parent)

Wellbeing Highlights

It is well known that spending time in nature is good for us – KHWP works to improve the health and wellbeing of local people by offering accessible nature connection opportunities through our volunteer programme, community allotment space, and professionally designed and delivered wellbeing programmes.

This year we:

- ✓ Delivered **120 nature-based wellbeing sessions** – the funding of which provided a social return worth **nearly £200,000**.
- ✓ Provided over **40 horticultural therapy sessions** at our wildlife friendly community allotment site for adults with poor mental health, physical health issues, and learning difficulties.
- ✓ **Improved the wellbeing of over 30 adults** suffering poor mental health and social isolation via our online Connect with Nature programme.
- ✓ Delivered **2 programmes of Green Wellbeing**, offering nature connection activities, including arts and crafts and woodwork, to adults with poor mental health at our community allotment.
- ✓ Provided **over 30 adults with social inclusion** and a sense of purpose and belonging through our weekly volunteer programme.
- ✓ Supported **7 families experiencing challenges** through our **therapeutic family forest school** intervention, Forest Time, with Broadwater Primary School.
- ✓ Hosted **tea and talk** sessions on our Community Allotment.
- ✓ Provided **local businesses and organisations** with opportunities for team or individual volunteering.



“My wellbeing has definitely improved - I’ve been feeling more motivated to leave the house even just for 5 minutes to explore nature. I’ve also felt better about talking to people I don’t know as a result of the group.”

(Connect with Nature online participant)

Financial Summary

KHWP is a non-profit organisation hosted administratively by Kent County Council. In 2024/25 our turnover was **£335,880** with an end of year reserves fund of £64k. 23% of our income was core funding, 36% was funding and grants for conservation, 11% for wellbeing grants and contracts, 12% was education and training grants and income, and 18% from other grants. **For every £1 of core funding given to KHWP we bring in an additional £4 to spend on local nature and community.**

This year our external grant funders included: Farming in Protected Landscapes, South East Water, Colyer Fergusson Trust, Environment Agency, Sport England, and a KCC Members Grant.

Find Out More...

Get in touch...Contact KHWP Manager, Cally Fiddimore, by emailing cally.fiddimore@kent.gov.uk or call 07545 743416. We would be very happy to provide presentations on our work to your groups or organisations.

Follow us online...You can find us online at www.khwp.org.uk , on Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn.

Come and join us! We always need volunteers and we welcome groups of volunteers (or individuals) from organisations and businesses looking to get involved – we have plenty to do year round. Tea, coffee, biscuits and great banter guaranteed!



“Thank you” from the KHWP Team!

A massive thank you to our core funders, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and Kent County Council, and to all our partners and funders – you enable us to carry out this important work making a real difference to people and nature.

And thank you to our fantastic volunteers and supporters – we could not operate without you!



Working In Partnership with