

NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release: 3rd October 2022

New leader of Cornwall Wildlife Trust calls for green recovery to help solve country's crises amid attack on nature

“Let’s help nature to help us” says Cornwall charity chief as public and wildlife face troubling times ahead

Nature’s recovery must not be pushed to the sidelines, the new head of Cornwall Wildlife Trust has said as communities in the South West face multiple pressures ahead this winter.

Dr Matt Walpole, who takes over as chief executive of the Trust, said the extent to which the country could flourish would be fundamentally underpinned by the state of nature. He called for action to be ramped up to tackle the loss of wildlife locally and for communities across Cornwall to come together to play their part.

In his first statement as head of Cornwall Wildlife Trust, he said: “These are times of great uncertainty and it’s proving to be a difficult year for many people in Cornwall. Nature loss and climate change will understandably be far from the biggest concern this winter. But it’s now that nature is needed more than ever; to lift our spirits, boost our health and wellbeing, support our farming and fishing and regulate our climate.

“We need nature – it underpins our economy, our society and our very existence. But nature needs us too! At a time when government leaders are threatening to scrap or at best water down environmental protections, we need everyone to champion the wildlife and wild places they love. We must defend nature and we urge the Government to clarify exactly how they’re going uphold their environmental commitments in any changes to policy or legislation that they propose to make.”

He added: “Sadly, the UK is one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world – in fact, we have very little left. And for all its wildness, that goes for Cornwall too.

“Conserving nature – by protecting the wild places and wildlife that remain – is not enough. Now must be a time of recovery – a green revolution.

“At Cornwall Wildlife Trust, we are taking bold action to restore the richness and abundance of nature on land and in our seas. We have a clear vision and we understand the urgency of acting now. It’s a collective effort – we need all hands on deck to bring our local wildlife back from the brink.”

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**Creating a Cornwall
where nature thrives**

Matt joins the Trust having held senior roles for international charities such as Fauna & Flora International and WWF International.

He also directed a ground-breaking, UK-wide assessment of the value of nature to society for the UK Government.

Matt's arrival comes at an important time for Cornwall Wildlife Trust as it celebrates its 60th anniversary.

The well-loved, local charity is supported by its 17,000 members, 1,000 volunteers and 100 staff members that manage its conservation projects, nature reserves and public engagement activities.

In July, Cornwall Wildlife Trust announced it had hit the target of its largest-ever fundraising appeal to secure land next to its Helman Tor nature reserve. The Trust also celebrated five years since beavers were reintroduced to Cornwall at the Cornwall Beaver Project this summer.

Matt continued: "There's huge potential for Cornwall to lead the way in tackling the big challenges of today, including the nature and climate crises. In our 60th year alone at Cornwall Wildlife Trust, we've shown that beavers can cut flooding whilst boosting wildlife populations. We're also taking steps to create the largest nature recovery project in Cornwall, thanks to the purchase of Creney Farm.

"The complex issues that we face today make our work just that little bit harder. But it's important we take action now before it's too late."

On joining the Trust, he said: "I'm delighted to be returning home to the place that's most special to me. Cornwall Wildlife Trust is at the helm of a fantastic movement of people building a wilder future for Cornwall, and I could not be more pleased to be taking on this role at this crucial time."

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- Cornwall Wildlife Trust Chief Executive Matt Walpole, credit Suzanne Johnson Photography
- Helman Tor nature reserve, credit Ben Watkins
- Hedgehog in autumn leaves, credit Tom Marshall

Videos:

- A message from our new Chief Executive Matt Walpole, credit Cornwall Wildlife Trust

Notes for editors:

Cornwall Wildlife Trust:

Cornwall Wildlife Trust has been protecting Cornwall's wildlife, both on land and in the sea since 1962. It is Cornwall's leading wildlife conservation charity, with over 17,000 members and 1,000 volunteers. The charity manages 59 nature reserves across Cornwall, including a range of habitats such as woodlands, meadows, wetlands and heaths. It also runs a number of marine and terrestrial based conservation projects in partnership with others, including Upstream Thinking and Penwith Landscape Partnership, and hosts the Environmental Records Centre for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly (ERCCIS).

The Trust is one of 46 in the UK. Together, they make up the Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts.

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