

Taking Forward The International Agenda For The Wildlife Trusts (TWT)



Leigh Morris | Chief Executive Officer

It is bitter-sweet for me to be writing this, as I prepare to leave my role as Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Manx Wildlife Trust at the end of May. I was appointed as CEO following two years working on the remote island of Saint Helena in the South Atlantic. The role with MWT was immediately to lead a conservation-focused organisation, with a portfolio of work across land and sea, within the world's only whole-Nation UNESCO Biosphere. The IOM was a place I'd visited previously and knew would be a great place to live.

I moved to the IOM in January 2020 and the last 5+ years have been a wonderful chapter of my life. I am extremely proud of MWT's growth and development, and of the achievements the MWT team have made for Manx nature during my tenure. Our Manx Nature magazines and annual reports of the last five years showcase many of the highlights, however, I am particularly proud to have been our CEO during MWT's 50th anniversary year and when we received the Kings Award for Voluntary Service (KAWS) earlier this year. I know I could have been very happy for years to come in this

role with MWT, but as life is finite, I feel I need a new chapter in my career and life story, and I have been offered an exciting new role which I am looking forward to taking on.

I am delighted that I will not completely lose my connection with MWT, as I am joining the central team of The Wildlife Trusts (TWT), as the Director of International. This is a new role, which aims to make the international conservation and climate change agendas far more relevant across the TWT federation, thus enhancing the link between TWT's work in a more Global to Local/Local to Global context. TWT was, after all, one of the five founding members of IUCN (The International Union for the Conservation of Nature) in the 1940s/50s, a piece of history of which we should be very proud. There are four strands to my new role:

1) Providing expertise to TWT on key developments in international programmes, treaties and organisations that are relevant to TWT's strategic aims: Act as a point of contact and a spokesperson for TWT on international nature and climate issues. Overseeing and

developing TWT's understanding towards the delivery of key global treaties and programmes. To include the United Nations (UN) Framework Convention on Climate Change, Convention on Biological Diversity, and Global Biodiversity Framework.

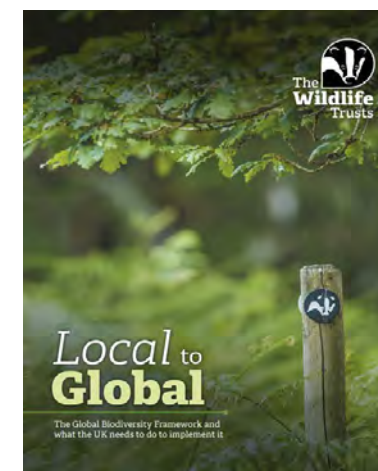


Cover of the UK's National Biodiversity Strategy.

2) Co-ordinating TWT participation in the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) working groups and committees: Lead on logistics and act as secretariat for TWT's participation in



IUCN working groups and meetings, and the UN Conference of the Parties (COP) meetings, attending in person when required.



Document (2024) published by TWT outlining the need to operate internationally.

3) Creating and co-ordinating an international engagement plan for TWT: Developing a 5-year plan to communicate the relevance of global agreements at the UK level. Engaging in international processes and communicating externally on how TWT is contributing to the international agenda.

4) Taking forward new areas for potential growth in the global arena

for TWT: Developing relationships with key organisations (i.e. Government departments, and international NGOs, based in the UK and overseas), identifying new partnerships and funding to support TWT's international work. To include scoping the potential to 'twin' local Wildlife Trusts with similar organisations or work programmes taking place abroad. Intrinsically linked to this will be supporting, upskilling and enabling staff from across TWT to participate in international engagement and development.



Within my new role at TWT I am certain that MWT (as one of the two existing 'international wildlife trusts') will remain a key relationship for me. For example, I will still be heavily involved with the Inter Island Environment Meeting (IIEM) being

hosted in the IOM in September 2025.

In respect to recruiting my replacement, MWT Council have appointed a CEO Recruitment sub-group, and they will be supported by Patience Thoday, the Chief Operating Officer of TWT (ironically, my new boss!). The ambition is to make the appointment in May. Unless it is an internal appointment, there will probably be a gap between me leaving at the end of May and the new CEO starting. If this is the case, then this gap will be covered by MWT Trustees supporting our existing Deputy CEO (Graham). It has also been agreed with TWT that 10 days of my time in my new role can be called on by MWT to help with the transition during the remainder of 2025.

I believe MWT is in an excellent position now, with a fantastic team, healthy finance, a strong support base in the IOM, and some outstanding work streams and funded projects that are becoming exemplars across TWT network. It is sincerely sad for me to be leaving you, but the time is right to move on, and I am certain it is more au revoir than goodbye!



TWT delegation (including Leigh Morris) at the IUCN Regional Conservation Forum, for Europe, North & Central Asia, Bruges, 2024.



All the delegates at the IUCN Regional Conservation Forum, for Europe & North & Central Asia, Bruges, 2024.



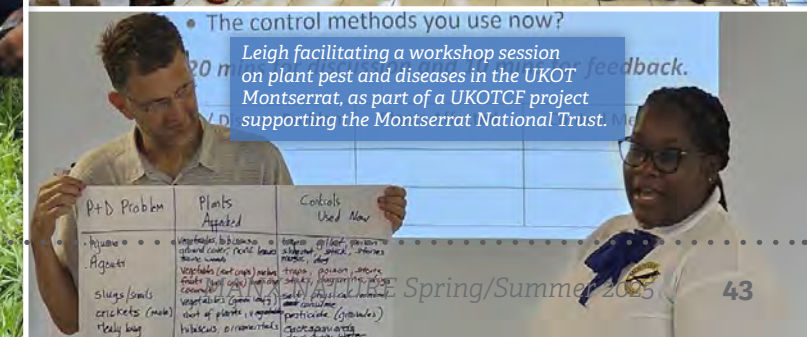
Leigh delivering horticulture training in the UKOT Montserrat, as part of a UKOTCF project supporting the Montserrat National Trust.



Former MWT Education Officer Beth Penhallurick, delivering teaching on tree planting to students from the Montserrat Secondary School, as part of a UKOTCF project supporting the Montserrat National Trust.



Leigh with some of the recipients of the horticulture training certificates in Montserrat, as part of a UKOTCF project supporting the Montserrat National Trust.



Leigh facilitating a workshop session on plant pest and diseases in the UKOT Montserrat, as part of a UKOTCF project supporting the Montserrat National Trust.