

MWT Annual Report 2024-25 (1-2-24 to 31-1-25) – Leigh Morris

Team Development:

- The transition to the new culture of us having a Head of Conservation & Land took place this year, with David Bellamy settling well into the role he commenced in December 2023.
- Further development of the MWT Leadership Team, aided greatly by having a clear conservation lead person in post.
- Welcoming new staff to MWT in the year: Katie Grace (Agri-Environment Officer), Steve Wright (Administrator), Seb Swithinbank, and Alex Ponko (Woodland Rangers), Amy Howse (our new Artist in Residence), Marnie Kelly (Communications Officer) and Rachel Martin (Education Officer).
- We held our staff away day in Peel (30 August), with a brilliant treasure hunt, quiz and picnic in Peel organized by Steve, Tricia and Lara. Wonderful!

Organisational and Infrastructure Development:

- A strategic crux issues workshop was held (November 2024) with four trustees and the CEO revising our crux issues for the next reporting year.
- We commenced the roll-out of a full ICT upgrade in the Peel office, including moving our files into the Cloud. This will deliver a tidier, more secure, robust and more easily remote accessible computer network. This is being delivered and managed by the Manx Technology Group and is set to be finished in early summer 2025.
- We were presented with a fantastic gift of the house, Thie Vunn (Munn's House) in Peel that will enable us to deliver the internship program we have had the ambition for, over many years. The house will also provide some 'spread' for the MWT office, with the dining room being bale to be used for meetings, and potentially education and training sessions. It will also home an MWT library and could be a workplace for potentially 1-2 staff (or hot desks).

Partnerships & Collaboration:

- **UNESCO Biosphere IOM:** CEO was part of the task and finish group that commissioned and appointed the new Chair of the IOM Biosphere Board (Sept 2024). This is indicative of how the IOM is increasingly getting behind our Biosphere Reserve and making it more of an all-Island driver for all we do. A progression in the support for our Biosphere Reserve aligns well with MWT's own specific ambitions. With the IOM businesses and financial sector now far more on board, there is much more progress to come. MWT CEO was asked to represent the IOM at the European Biosphere Conference (EuroMAB) in Wittenberg, Germany, in June 2024.
- Two previous MWT CEOs, Duncan Bridges and Caroline Steel, both re-visited our Peel office this year. The first time our current CEO had met them and it was very interesting to get their insights and reflections.
- Relationships with the Manx National Farmers Union (MNFU) and some elements of the Manx farming community were disappointingly quite strained during the year. This was due to the MNFU putting in a lengthy objection to our tree planting application for MWT Creg y Cowin. Thankfully planning permission was unanimously approved and the Creg y Cowin project was then awarded the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve Environmental Award for 2024 (jointly awarded to MWT and the IOM Woodland Trust). For our wider re-forestation ambitions, it was crucial that we gained planning permission, which we did.
- Internationally, in addition to EuroMAB, the CEO and other MWT staff attended the Inter-Island Environment Meeting (IIEM) in Jersey (September 2024), the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) European Forum (Nov 2024) meetings, and the CEO and Education Officer both made trips to Montserrat, funded by the UK Overseas Territories conservation Forum (UKOTCF), to support the delivery of two UKOTCF Darwin Projects with the Montserrat National Trust. The IIEM is being held for the first time in the IOM in September 2025 and an organising group was established at the end of 2024. CEO is working with UKOTCF on the development of Eco-Match, on-line site to link environmental projects with corporate partners.

- The Wildlife Trusts (TWT) federation and central team remain a crucial network and support base for MWT. Chair and CEO attended the leadership events, including the Leaders Conference at Wyboston Lakes (Nov 2024).
- Our patrons, His Excellency Sir John and Lady Lorimer, continued to be well engaged and extremely supportive. During 2024 MWT CEO helped to train them both to scuba dive, and then led them on dives on HMS Racehorse wreck site and the Sugarloaf Caves. It was great that in his Christmas address, Sir John highlighted learning to scuba dive with MWT as their 2024 highlight.
- The new manager of Tesco in the Isle of Man, Richard Frear, has been excellent in his engagement and support for finding an improved solution to supply the Calf Wardens with food. This is set to commence in March 2025.
- Our corporate partnerships continue to grow – see below:

Corporate Engagement:

This year saw a continued increase in support for MWT from the IOM business community, which is paying dividends for us and Manx Nature. This included the many IOM businesses supporting our work, and specifically:

- Purchase of 43-acre extension to MWT Dalby Mountain Nature Reserve by Resilience Asset Management.
- Launch of Crossags Carbon Scheme (18 March 2024) supported by four IOM based corporates. A preferential loan from Lloyds Bank International to purchase the land, is being paid off by PDMS, Hansard and Resilience Asset Management. This has been a great step for us in providing the first wholly on-Island carbon credit scheme. We hope it will also encourage the IOM Govt to develop a wider IOM endorsed carbon credit registry and credit scheme.
- Further Aviva funding for our woodland work, through The Wildlife Trusts temperate rainforest restoration programme. This year Aviva have supported the ongoing maintenance of MWT Glion Darragh NR and the setup of a tree nursery at Milntown.
- Being selected as the 'charity of choice' by the Chamber of Commerce, the Society of Chartered Accountants, and at the Awards for Excellence.
- Donations of £45k from two corporates towards our Make Space for Nature campaign.
- Orsted funding for community projects including Make Space for Nature and the Community Garden at Government House.
- CEO being invited to participate in the IOM Government Sustainable Finance event/panel at the Villa Marina in November (MWT were the only environmental organisation invited to attend).

This support MWT receive from corporates is far from green washing and is a direction of travel towards more sustainable businesses, which is gathering pace, with MWT being seen as a keyway they can deliver (through us) positive outcomes for the only whole nation UNESCO Biosphere Reserve in the world.

Business – Wildlife Limited (WLL):

- Ecology Vannin: Income and financial contribution to MWT's charitable work continued to increase steadily, and the business continues to give best on-island advice for nature. We have explored linking and learning from Middlemarch Consultancies (the largest ecological consultancy within The Wildlife Trusts, owned by Warwickshire WT), and we are developing our upskilling and delivery of Biodiversity Net Gain, working closely with Hartford Homes on Braddon Road and other projects.
- Retail: The EPoS electronic till system was fully installed and operational this year. New products with a stronger link to sustainability and our conservation work added. We took out a lease on a kiosk in the Douglas Sea Terminal, and ran this as a pop-up shop in the run up to Christmas. This is our first step to having a permanent MWT presence in our Capital City.

Conservation:

- Continued development of our woodland work and team across the MWT Hairpin Woodland Park, MWT Creg y Cowin, MWT Glion Darragh and with other potential sites identified. Milntown Nursery planning progressed, with the aim to carry out the physical nursery expansion in spring 2025.
- Following the drone survey of the Ballaugh Curragh that MWT commissioned in January 2023, we were contracted by DEFA to organize a follow-up Wallaby (and goat) Survey over a larger area at the start of this reporting year. This showed that there are an estimated 1,200 feral wallabies living in the Island. We believe that the information we are adding to the conversation is influencing the narrative around wallabies.
- Seagrass survey dives carried out at Gansey, Laxey and Ramsey, which has provided much more detail for the precise mapping of our eelgrass.

Engagement:

- Our Wildlife Gardening Certificate course ran again this year at St Johns Mill on evenings in May-July, with presentation evening for students 8th August. The ambition is that this course is offered across TWT federation and over 30 wildlife trusts have already expressed an interest in delivering the course in future. Three Trusts have been selected by us to trial the course in 2025: Kent, Northumberland, and North Wales.
- The MWT Hairpin Woodland Park was formally opened by our Patrons, Sir John and Lady Lorimer on 9 May 2024. The partnership with Rotary Club of Douglas and Milntown Estate & Gardens is excellent and once the carpark, brown sign at the Hairpin, and entry point from Milntown into HWP are in place, we can promote far strongly and drive visitors.
- Our engagement in Douglas and Onchan continues to expand and develop well. Community projects at MWT Onchan Wetlands, Government House, Nobles Park and our close working with Douglas City Council. This included MWT being intrinsically involved in the judging and delivery of Dragonflies Den. MWT CEO met Dana Eynon, the Director of Environment & Regeneration for Douglas Council, who is very supportive of partnership working with MWT and a drive towards increased urban greening in and around Douglas.
- The MWT team collected 3 of the 6 IOM Biosphere Awards at the annual ceremony and collecting another at the Awards for Excellence.
- Our Biosphere Artist in Residence (AiR) programme, supported by the IOM Arts Council continues to engage wider and diverse audiences in nature. Following the brilliant (award winning!) work of Clare and Ali, we appointed our third AiR, Amy Howse, and we look forward to experiencing how Amy will deliver the next residency through sound. From an idea 3+ years ago, to gaining one year's funding, to now having a programme that is becoming imbedded in IOM culture, and engaging a wider and more diverse audience in nature is fantastic to see. It's great that on the back of this Visit IOM have agreed to now fund a Photographer in Residence in 2025.
- A major highlight in the year was having the Kings Award for Voluntary Service (KAVS) bestowed on all our wonderful volunteers over the last 52 years. The award ceremony to take place in early 2025 at Government House.