



CEO Report 1st February 2020 to 31st January 2021 (Leigh Morris)

Introduction:

I joined as CEO of Manx Wildlife Trust (MWT) in January 2020 just two weeks before the start of the 2020-21 reporting year, so this report covers my first 12 months in post. 2020-21 was I believe, a very interesting, unusual, and progressive year for MWT.

This report is structured under the following headings:

1. Strategic Development and Key Cross-Cutting Issues.
2. Partnership Working.
3. Membership, Marketing & Engagement.
4. Education.
5. Nature Reserves.
6. Terrestrial Conservation.
7. Marine Conservation and Calf of Man.
8. Ecological Consultancy.

1. Strategic Development and Key Cross-Cutting Issues:

Coronavirus: This impacted early in the year when we went into our first Island lockdown in March 2020. COVID-19 impacted on MWT for the rest of the year, with income and many of our education and engagement activities being negatively impacted. MWT received financial support from IOM Govt & Manx Lottery Trust during the first lockdown period. Our staff team developed more of a remote working culture and enhanced their online/digital skills.

Strategy: We held a series of MWT strategy planning workshops during May 2020, all delivered via the online platform Zoom. This enabled us to produce our new top line strategy, with an agreed Vision, Mission and three core strategic goals, to:

- Drive the development of a Nature Recovery Network (NRN) across the IOM.
- Champion Nature-based Solutions (N-bS) in the IOM.
- Connect people in the IOM strongly to nature.

This strategy has now been adopted and rolled out across all MWT channels and is being used as the driver for individual staff and wider projects. Our three strategic goals are completely in line with the ambition of The Wildlife Trusts federation.

Staff Team Development: A new culture of weekly staff team meetings and written Work Programmes was established in early 2020, which has sustained and is evolving well. The Calf Wardens are part of this new culture and join meetings via Zoom. I held two 1-2-1 detailed meetings with each staff member at the end of this year to revise/agree individual Role Descriptors and set targets for the year ahead. A new Staff Appraisal & Development Scheme was launched, our first Staff Away Day took place, and an MWT Group Pension Scheme has been set up with Zurich Pensions via MAC Group IOM. All Human Resource issues were supported by an external HR consultant – Global People Solutions.

Trustee Recruitment: Post the launch of our new strategy, we commenced the search for new Trustees to join MWT Council. This was the first time in MWT history that we openly advertised for Trustees to join us. We had 29 good applications, of which 20 were interviewed (and 10 were then subsequently given a final interview in March 2021). We had an excellent range of applicants, with potential members for Council, Committees and/or Working Groups.

MWT Gift Shop: Rachel Hartnoll indicated her intention to retire as Shop Manager/Buyer in February 2021 (and subsequently did so). Rachel contributed massively for many years and will be missed.



Funding & Finance: A key task at the start of the year was to revise the 2019-20 budget produced in Nov 2019. This was done by me, with all staff who manage budgets, with the broad aim of the staff gaining a greater understanding, and taking more ownership of, the finances of MWT (money is not a dirty word!). There was some good progress in the development of MWT use of SAGE accounting software, but more work still to do. Overall, MWT performed far better than budget in 20-21, making a surplus of c.£23K at year end, compared to a forecast deficit of -£57K.

2. Partnership Working:

For MWT to achieve our ambitions, it is vital that we work closely and positively with other organisations. This is something that I personally believe is crucial and fundamental to future MWT success. From early in my tenure as CEO I have set out to foster collaborative links, including the writing and signing of Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) this year with:

- Manx National Farmers Union (MNFU) – who participated in our strategy workshops.
- Manx National Heritage (MNH) – Public launch of MoU held. Senior staff had partnership meetings in Nov/Dec with aim to set up long-term partnership for the Calf of Man. MWT were made an official partner for the MNH Manx Wildlife Week in 2021.
- Manx Whale and Dolphin Watch (MWDW)

Positive discussions held with other organisations, which could lead towards an MoU: Beach Buddies, Farming and Wildlife Advisory Groups (FWAG), Manx Bat Group, Manx Butterfly Conservation, Manx Game Preservation Society, Manx Grassland Society and the Curraghs Wildlife Park, who made MWT beneficiaries of their Conservation Fund.

Department of Environment, Food and Agriculture (DEFA): MWT have very good relationship with DEFA. We have regular meetings with Minister Boot and his senior Team (the first in my tenure took place in August 2020). I participated in the DEFA chaired Manx Nature Conservation Forum (MNCF) meetings, and joined a new Biodiversity Delivery Group, set up by DEFA to monitor and steer the ongoing delivery of the IOM Biodiversity Strategy. NB: Other IOM Govt. departments worked with positively including DoE, DoI and DESC.

IOM Environmental Educators Group: This was an idea I pitched to the IOM Government, which has been adopted. All the environmental organisations in the IOM who do schools education have come together as a group to share ideas and explore ways of developing more joint working. The first meeting was held via Zoom, with a subsequent meeting (14/10/20) was face-to-face.

The Wildlife Trusts (TWT): A benefit of COVID-19 was the use of online meetings platforms, which was particularly evident within TWT. The MWT Chair and I as CEO participated in several on-line meetings, strategic working groups, and a TWT leaders conference. This included me joining the TWT 30:30:30 campaign Group (i.e. “Raising £30m to bring nature back to 30% of land and sea, by 2030”).

Global Collaboration: MWT have become a member of the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum (UKOTCF), an umbrella body linking all the conservation organisations in UKOTs and Crown Dependencies. I attended the online Inter-Island Environmental Meeting (for all Crown Dependencies) and was selected as an IOM Ambassador for Island Innovation.



3. Membership, Marketing & Engagement:

A key priority this year was to increase the presence of MWT's brand on the Island and improve our digital footprint. To assist with this, we appointed a new Communications Assistant in March 2020 (Rachael Harrop).

Digital Engagement: Key achievements were the launch of our new *www.mwt.im* website (getting rid of the UK URL), a huge increase in our social media posts and connections, Our AGM was held on-line via Zoom, and we held our first live webinar 'Wild Night In' for our members. MWT Education Officer produced a series of on-line education films for school children, and we distributed a digital edition of our Manx Nature magazine during COVID lockdown. An on-line shop for MWT branded clothing set up with Rapanui. Art of Nature exhibition in conjunction with MNH at the House of Manannan also switched on-line with a digital catalogue.

Beyond Digital: We produced new generic leaflet and strategy leaflet/bookmarks that are widely distributed around the IOM, the purchase and distribution of MWT pin badges and car stickers, more branded MWT clothing (including for all the Calf Team). We also made the positive decision to overtly champion the IOM status as a UNESCO Biosphere and have included the logo when appropriate.

Nature Discovery Centres: We carried out a review of the engagement at our two Visitor Centres at Scarlett and the Ayres and have agreed to change their name to *Nature Discovery Centres* and drive more engagement with nature at both sites. The detail of how this is delivered is to be finalised. A new 10-year lease for Scarlett was agreed with the landlord Willie Christian.

Other: MWT had a stand at the Onchan Park Fun Day. Festival of the Sea 2020 was a tremendous success with over 4,000 people visiting. Off-the-shelf packs have been created for selling MWT Memberships and MWT/MWDW Adopt-a-Dolphin Packs. A review of our pricing for events and education sessions was carried out, and prices increased.

Volunteer Coordination: This was carried out part-time by Sarah Hickey and the ambition remains to fund/appoint a full-time Volunteer Coordinator. An up-to-date spread sheet was finalised, a generic MWT Volunteers Handbook completed, newsletter launched, and the inaugural MWT Volunteer Leaders meeting held via Zoom (this is a meeting for all those in MWT who supervise or coordinate the activities of volunteers). Generic MWT Awards Scheme for volunteers was reintroduced, with the first awards being presented on 29/9/20.

4. Education:

Our education contract with IOM Government (DESC and DEFA) was extended for another year. Within COVID-19 lockdown the focus has been the creation of a series of on-line films to support home schooling. Our Education Officer Dawn created a series of filmed sessions that were made available online via Facebook and YouTube.

The Govt contract is the bulk of our current education income, and to mitigate the risk of losing the contract we are actively developing a wider portfolio of education income, which includes full cost recovery adult education programmes. Successful MWT Adult Education Open Afternoon held in partnership with Jane Prescott. Following this MWT developed three new public education courses for delivery as pilots in 2021: Wildlife Gardening, Wildlife Observer and Magnificent Meadows.



5. Nature Reserves:

Two strong volunteer groups maintained throughout the year – Midweek Muckers on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Muckers started up again post-COVID on 24th June 2020. Botanical surveys and grass cutting key outputs this period in our NRs.

I visited all 24 MWT nature reserves and the land at Ramsey Forest during the year. There are some outstanding boundary issues at some reserves, MWT Trustee Simon Cain has given advice on these on-going legal issues. A new MWT Land Acquisition Form was created and is being tested.

6. Terrestrial Conservation:

Wildflowers of Mann: We continued to be funded for one day per week for our Conservation Officer Andree. ToR were re-drafted and agreed with DEFA, with the focus now on our joint Ramsey Forest project, which we are aiming to develop more widely.

Ramsey Forest: Rotary Club of Douglas (RCD) want to make this their Centenary Project and potentially fund us c.£150K to enable development. Detailed plans were drawn up by Prescott Associates, funded by RCD. The key next stage is the long-term tenure of the core Claghbane land and DEFA are taking this forward.

Action for Wildlife (AFW): Remains a core priority for MWT. There is an agreed list of priority AFW projects, each of which needs funding, partners, and detailed planning. MNH and DEFA are key stakeholders and discussions are progressing to get their support. Needs funding and prioritisation. A detailed development plan for Curragh has been produced by MWT, endorsed by DEFA and is now with MNH (the major landowner in the Curraghs). MWT carried out initial assessment of DEFA forest sites for increased biodiversity.

Wildlife Sites: Creation/designation of more Wildlife Sites is once again an agreed priority for MWT within our new strategy. We are aiming to take this forward in 2021-22.

Agri-Environment Scheme: DEFA are launching a new IOM Agri-Environment Scheme (AES) in 2021 and MWT submitted a comprehensive tender to deliver this (NB: we were successful in our tender and commenced delivery with DEFA in July 2021).

Manx Mires (Upland Peat) Project: Progress with upland peat surveying very good, with Sarah Hickey and volunteers now having data for 30% of IOM upland peat, for depth and presence of sphagnum (which can indicate actively growing peat). We have been commissioned by DEFA to carry out more detailed surveying of the upland peat around Turbury and Snaefell.

Carbon Offsetting: With assistance from Simon Sheath, an intern funded by the DfE, and the Climate Change Team, we produced a draft Manx Carbon offsetting proposal. We are aiming to align with the scheme being developed by TWT but ensuring there is additionality to any Manx scheme. Our ambition is that this links to all our terrestrial conservation work.

7. Marine Conservation & Calf of Man:

Funding: The Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for our contract with DEFA were revised, with the additional day for our Marine Officer, Lara, being cut (i.e. funding cut from two to one day). We have utilised restricted funds for 'freshwater conservation work', to widen our remit and retain Lara full-time. Our application to the Dr Scholl foundation was successful and we submitted a bid to Sea Changers for sea grass conservation work (NB: this was successful, and work commenced in 2021). Marine/freshwater consultancy work delivered by Lara including the monitoring of Peel silt removal. We have been appointed IOM coordinators for Seasearch and will be funded 1 day/week to do this.



Freshwater Work: Freshwater conservation work has commenced. We agreed the priorities for our freshwater conservation work with DEFA: freshwater mussel (pea and pearl) and eels.

TWT Irish Sea Collaboration: Dr Emily Baxter, Head of TWT Northwest Living Seas Programme visited in February 2020 to link us to wider TWT Irish Sea initiative, with the intention being to bring all six Nations in/around the Irish Sea together. MWT have joined this new group of staff working for The Wildlife Trusts connected to the Irish Sea, aiming to drive a more collaborative approach.

Wider Engagement: Our MWT Marine Committee met on 13th August 2020 (NB this has now evolved into a Marine and Freshwater Group). Festival of the Sea was a great success. Our Adopt-a-Dolphin scheme with MWDW refreshed and a joint marine megafauna spotting event held at the Calf Sound. MWT have joined the embryonic Langness Conservation Group convened by Tim Earl and Liz Charter.

Calf of Man: Our Wardens were taken off the Calf during the COVID-19 Lockdown period and much data was therefore not recorded in the season. We greatly increased the communication about and promotion of the work of our Team in the Bird Observatory, which included digital communications (i.e. a new webpage, films, images, and social media content).

Calf Research Strategy: MWT have done the initial work around the development of a Research Strategy for the Calf. After internal and external meetings with the Bird Observatories Council and the British Trust for Ornithology a discussion document was sent to MNH.

Calf Partnership: Positive meetings took place with the MNH Director, Edmund Southworth, and his senior team, with the aim of developing a long-term partnership agreement between MWT and MNH that negates the need for repeated tenders to run the Bird Observatory and stimulates MWT to invest time and funding beyond the terms of a time limited delivery contract.

8. Ecological Consultancy:

Our ecological consultancy work has expanded significantly (>100% increase) this year, making a financial contribution of c.£44K for 20-21. This was due to two key factors:

- Consultancy has become a stronger focus for the MWT Team: LM took on more of a management role to support our key consultant, Adam Denard. Consultancy became the focus for Sarah Hickey, which enabled us to extend Sarah's contract beyond August 2020. Other MWT staff are contributing to the consultancy work.
- The impact of COVID-19 prevented businesses in the IOM from employing ecological consultants from the UK. Much of this work came to MWT. We believe we delivered this well and we aim to retain these clients going forward when the borders re-open.

Additional support is being contracted in from Cornwall Environmental Consultancies Ltd. (the consultancy arm of Cornwall Wildlife Trust) to assist with report verification.