

An aerial photograph of Cambridge, showing a dense cluster of historic university buildings with red-tiled roofs and stone walls, interspersed with green trees. In the background, the city extends into a flat landscape under a clear sky. The text is overlaid on the top and center of the image.

CAMBRIDGE PAST, PRESENT & FUTURE

2024-25 ANNUAL REVIEW

Protecting the Beauty of Cambridge and its Environment



HRH the Duke of Edinburgh with CEO James Littlewood, celebrating Wandlebury's 70th anniversary, November 2024



Lord-Lieutenant Julie Spence, with CEO James Littlewood and warden Hannah Warren, planting a Black Mulberry in the Wandlebury Orchard.

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CEO's Review

Reflecting on progress and partnership across a year of growth

The fantastic work highlighted in this report shows how much can be achieved when people care deeply about place. The efforts of our staff, trustees, volunteers, supporters and partners have brought real progress for Cambridge's people, heritage and nature.

Our work to provide more and better green spaces continues. We have increased the land we care for through the gift of a woodland and a new partnership with King's College to manage Grantchester Meadows. We have set out an ambitious vision to convert our farmland at Coton into a new nature reserve, beginning with planting 2,400 trees and sowing a wildflower meadow. Across our sites, volunteers contributed 4,076 hours planting trees, restoring woodland and hedgerows, maintaining ponds and meadows, and improving paths and seating.

We also celebrated 70 years since CPPF acquired Wandlebury, marked by a visit from HRH the Duke of Edinburgh, who planted a commemorative tree. Earlier in the year, HM Lord-Lieutenant Julie Spence OBE QPM planted another, honouring all those who have cared for Wandlebury over seven decades.

Our historic buildings have benefitted from maintenance and repair, and we are progressing plans for major investment in the Leper Chapel. Four new Blue Plaques were installed recognising remarkable people, and at Wandlebury, students from the University of Cambridge uncovered new archaeological evidence.

We continue to speak up for the landscapes and heritage of greater Cambridge. We responded to 76 planning and heritage applications and proposals, and worked to influence plans for industry, housing and infrastructure so that growth respects our area's unique character. Our campaign for less damaging busway routes gathered momentum.

We are engaging with more people than ever. Over 200,000 people enjoyed our green spaces, we organised 195 educational and cultural events, and 1,642 children took part in outdoor learning. Our River Cam CAN project has brought communities together to improve water quality and resilience along the river. Membership grew by more than 10 percent, and our new website and communications are reaching a wider audience. The enthusiasm of new supporters and volunteers has been heartening.

I am proud of all that our team has achieved this year, even as the context grows more challenging. Cambridge's expansion continues, with too little water for developments already underway and climate impacts becoming harder to ignore. Our role as the voice for a balanced, beautiful, liveable Cambridge has never been more vital.

We are deeply grateful to everyone who has supported our mission. Together, we are keeping Cambridge special for people, nature and heritage, and for generations to come.

James Littlewood, CEO

Protecting Greater Cambridge

Advocating for sustainable growth in a rapidly changing city

Cambridge continues to grow faster than almost anywhere else in the UK. Between 2010 and 2021, the city's population increased by 17.6%, compared with a national average of 6.6%, and plans for the next 25 years suggest even greater pressure ahead. With new housing, industry and infrastructure all vying for space, the landscapes and heritage that make this place unique are under constant threat.

Our charity works to ensure that local voices are heard and that growth respects the beauty of Cambridge and its environment. This means engaging with councils, developers, government agencies and community groups, and sometimes standing firm in the face of overwhelming pressure.

During the year, we responded to 56 planning applications, consultations and proposals, a significant increase on the previous year. Many involved large commercial schemes likely to alter Cambridge's skyline and character for decades to come.

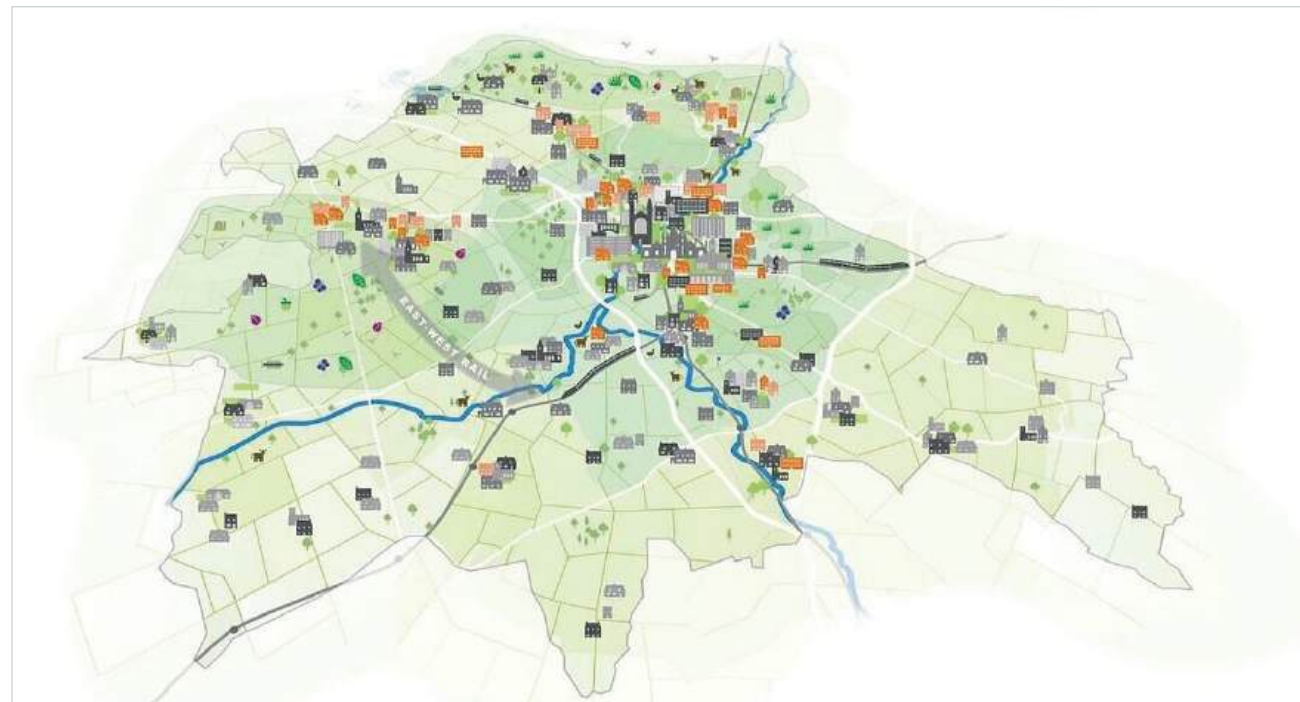
We also continued to highlight the local water

crisis. Years of rapid growth have depleted groundwater supplies, leaving too little for both people and nature. Low river flows are worsening pollution in our chalk streams and the River Cam. Despite our objections, several new developments were approved, so we are working with partners to find practical solutions through our Coton Wetland and River Cam CAN projects.

Transport remains another major concern. We have continued our long-running campaign against plans for new bus roads through open countryside, arguing instead for less damaging, more sustainable alternatives that protect the setting of Cambridge. Two public inquiries will take place in 2025–26, and we are preparing evidence to ensure that nature and heritage have a strong voice.

We are incredibly grateful for the work of our dedicated and expert planning volunteers, supported by our Chief Executive and Planning Officer, together they play a vital role in this work, offering professional expertise, countless hours of scrutiny, and a passion for place.

Speaking up for Cambridge's future 56 development plans reviewed



Nature & Green Spaces

Restoring, protecting and celebrating Cambridge's natural spaces

Cambridge is expanding fast, but at the same time, nature is in steep decline. Our work focuses on reversing that trend: restoring landscapes, creating new habitats, and inspiring people to reconnect with the living world around them.

Key to achieving this is our long-term vision for Coton Countryside Reserve. In 2024 we launched the Coton Vision, a plan to transform 200 acres of farmland west of Cambridge into a thriving, nature-rich landscape. To support the next phase of this vision, we have begun to bring more land under our direct management, so that it can be restored for nature and people alike. During the year volunteers helped us take our first steps by planting 2,400 trees and shrubs and sowing a wildflower meadow, enabling us to move steadily toward a wilder, more vibrant Coton.

Working with Anglian Water, we are progressing plans for a new wetland at Coton that will improve water quality, capture carbon, reduce flood risk and create vital new habitat. At Wandlebury Country Park, our Woodland Restoration Project reopened a five-acre area that had been closed for safety reasons. The newly restored paths now invite visitors to explore a rich mix of habitats teeming with wildlife. We were also gifted three acres of woodland near Little Shelford, that we will manage as a haven for nature.

We entered a new partnership with King's College to help manage Grantchester Meadows, one of Cambridge's most cherished landscapes.

The collaboration will support both ecological improvement and community access, with plans shaped by local voices and seasonal wardens already in post.

4,076 volunteer hours dedicated to protecting the green spaces that make Cambridge so special

Staff and volunteers also carried out essential conservation work across Wandlebury Country Park, Coton Reserve and Barnwell Meadows, from hedge-laying and pond care to meadow management, woodland restoration and litter picking. Volunteers contributed 4,076 hours of hands-on effort, equivalent to more than two full-time members of staff.

We continue to play a leading role in the Cambridge Nature Network, a partnership of organisations, landowners and communities working to "double nature" by 2050. As part of this, we lead the River Cam CAN (Climate Action through Nature) project, supported by the National Lottery Communities Fund. The initiative brings together community organisations and local people to take positive action for their environment and their wellbeing.

Across our landscapes, partnerships and projects, the thread is the same: working together to make space for nature, and for people, to thrive.

Heritage & Historic Buildings

Connecting people with the stories and places that shape Cambridge

Cambridge's historic buildings are the soul of the landscape we protect. Each tells part of the story of this place, from medieval craftsmanship to industrial ingenuity, and each needs care, advocacy and financial support to survive.

During the year, our staff and volunteers have continued the patient work of maintenance and repair at Bourn Windmill, Hinxton Watermill, Cambridge Leper Chapel and Wandlebury's historic buildings. Volunteer-run guided tours and open days proved as popular as ever, giving visitors a glimpse into the living history of traditional milling and medieval life.

At Wandlebury, a new partnership with the University of Cambridge Department of Archaeology has opened a fascinating new chapter. Students carried out fieldwork at the Scheduled Ancient Monument to explore 2,000 years of history, uncovering features believed to be part of an Iron Age ditch. Their work adds valuable insight, and invites the public to rediscover the site's rich past.

The Leper Chapel has been added to the Historic England Heritage at Risk Register due to long-term decline. While concerning, this designation opens doors to vital funding for restoration, and a small grant has already enabled expert surveys to plan the next phase of repair.

We are grateful to the volunteers on our Heritage Watch Group for monitoring planning applications that could harm historic buildings or conservation areas, responding to 20 proposals this year. This included the Cambridge's Market Square redevelopment, helping ensure that plans respect the city's civic heart and historic character.

Four new Blue Plaques recognising remarkable people who have helped shape Cambridge's story

The Cambridge & District Blue Plaques scheme, run by our dedicated volunteers, had an especially active year, installing four new plaques that recognise remarkable local lives:

- Agnes Arber, botanist, at Huntingdon Road
- Richarda Townsend, aviator, at Cambridge Airport
- Tom Bacon, engineer, at Little Shelford
- George Brewster, chimney sweep, at Fulbourn Hospital

An unveiling event was held for each plaque with the help of partners ranging from the University of Cambridge to Marshall of Cambridge, a reminder that shared history helps unite us.



Education & Culture

Inspiring learning, wellbeing and connection through nature and heritage



Inspiring people to care for the world around them is at the heart of our work. Through hands-on learning and shared cultural experiences, we help people of all ages connect more deeply with nature and heritage.

Our schools programme continues to thrive. Based at Wandlebury Country Park, it offers outdoor, curriculum-linked learning focused on science, nature and Iron Age history. In 2024-25 we welcomed 44 school groups (up from 27 the previous year), engaging 1,642 children, a full return to pre-pandemic levels. Teachers rated their experience an excellent 9 out of 10, highlighting the value of real-world learning in green spaces.

Our public events programme brought people together throughout the year, from open days and guided walks to theatre, dance, re-enactments and community celebrations. In total, we hosted 195 educational, cultural and wellbeing activities,

many delivered in partnership with local organisations.

As part of the River Cam CAN project, we also organised the Cambridge Nature Festival, a joyful series of 150+ free and low-cost activities across the city and surrounding countryside, from nature walks and bat safaris to creative workshops and family BioBlitzes.

At our Annual Meeting in November, over 80 guests gathered in Cambridge to hear broadcaster Tom Heap speak on "How We Use Land on a Crowded Island." It was a thought-provoking conversation that perfectly captured the balance CPPF seeks every day, between growth and care, progress and preservation.

Through these shared experiences, we're not just passing on knowledge, we're nurturing a sense of belonging, curiosity and stewardship that will help sustain Cambridge's beauty for generations to come.

1,642 young people connected with nature and history through outdoor learning at the Wandlebury Outdoor Education Centre.

Health & Wellbeing

Supporting healthier, happier lives through access to nature



The landscapes we care for are more than beautiful places, they're part of the city's lungs and soul. Every visit, and every walk contributes to people's health and happiness.

Across Wandlebury Country Park, Coton Countryside Reserve and Grantchester Meadows, we continue to provide green, restorative spaces for everyone to enjoy. Together these sites welcome more than 200,000 visits each year, offering the chance to breathe deeply, slow down, and connect with the natural world.

Our Warden team and volunteers keep over 9 km of footpaths open and safe, maintain toilets, car parks, picnic areas and informal play, and provide an 8am-to-dusk presence to help visitors feel welcome and supported. We've added 12 new picnic benches at Wandlebury, two at Coton, and

refurbished another at Hinxton, alongside new seating in key viewpoints. For visitors with limited mobility, a free-to-use off-road mobility scooter remains available at Wandlebury, helping more people experience the joy of being outdoors.

Our Healthy Walks programme at Wandlebury continues to bring people together every week for gentle, sociable exercise in nature. Over the year, participants completed 800 walks in total, each one a small step towards better wellbeing and connection.

Whether it's a family picnic, a purposeful walk or a moment of peace among the trees, these experiences are a reminder that protecting the environment is also an act of caring for ourselves and each other.

Communications & Fundraising

Inspiring people to care, give and take action for Cambridge's future

This year we've focused on strengthening the way we connect with our supporters, making it easier for people to discover our work, engage with it, and feel part of something that matters.

We redesigned our members' magazine and digital newsletter, updated key leaflets and signage, and launched a new website in April 2025. The new site has already attracted thousands of new visitors and provides a stronger platform for fundraising and membership growth. Recognising that people are increasingly using search engines and AI to find information online we expanded and optimised our Google listings. Our digital newsletter subscriber list doubled, from 4,370 to over 8,500, and our social media impressions rose dramatically.

All of this work is helping us reach a much wider and more diverse audience than ever before and we are pleased to report that membership grew by more than 10%, from 2,018 to 2,288, with nearly 700 new members joining during the year. We also now have 26 patrons who support our work with a larger annual donation.

Behind the scenes, we've worked hard to improve the member and donor experience. A major data cleanse and migration to a new CRM system now allows us to automate renewals,

personalise communications and manage supporter relationships more efficiently, all without increasing staff workload.

Our work continued to receive strong media coverage, from local radio and press to national features highlighting our campaigns, nature projects and events. Campaigns such as Save Coton Orchard and stories about our Blue Plaques attracted wide attention, bringing in new supporters and reinforcing our reputation as a trusted local voice for nature and heritage.

To be able to maintain and improve the green spaces and historic buildings in our care, to influence the sustainable development of Cambridge and to run a packed programme of educational and cultural activities requires significant funds to be raised every year.

In 2024/25 we ran several fundraising appeals, including for Wandlebury's 70th Anniversary, Cambourne to Cambridge Busway/Save Coton Orchard Campaign and Wilder Coton. We were grateful to receive generous legacy donations from Anthony Cooper and John Tebbit; the latter included the gift of 3 acres of woodland. Volunteers helped us to raise funds through the open days that they hold at our historic buildings.

Our work this year has been made possible by the deep generosity of our supporters, including the following individuals, trusts, foundations, and organisations. Thank you.

Arm
Big Give
Birketts Solicitors
Cala Homes
Cambridge Rotary Club
Cambridgeshire Community Foundation
Carter Jonas
D J Everson
Historic England

Illumina
Kings College
Lingard Foundation
Longfellow Real Estate
Marshall of Cambridge
National Lottery Community Fund
National Philanthropic Trust
Natural England
PECT

Financial Review

A year of strong performance across our charitable activities

Income & Expenditure* 2024/25 2023/24

Income	£000's	£000's
Investment Income	168	158
Rents	203	207
Membership	100	69
Donations and Bequests	193	152
Wandlebury Car Park	83	85
Restricted Grants	256	205
Education Programme	23	19
Other Income	43	39
Total	1069	934

Expenditure	£000's	£000's
Estates	506	574
Planning & Green Spaces	126	56
Education Programme	67	54
Comms Membership	126	115
Fundraising & Other Costs	29	38
Total	854	837
Net income before investment gains	215k	97k

*Excludes partner expenditure

Results for the Year

Thanks to the generosity of our supporters, this has been another strong year for the charity. Increased income allowed us to invest more in our core work, protecting and enhancing Cambridge's natural and built heritage.

Total funds grew by £112k (2023-24 £153k). Income rose to £983k (2023-24 £934k). Expenditure was £854k (2023-24 £837k), giving a surplus of £129k. Donations, bequests and grants were £363k (2023-24 £357k), including £256k (2023-24 £205k) in restricted income.

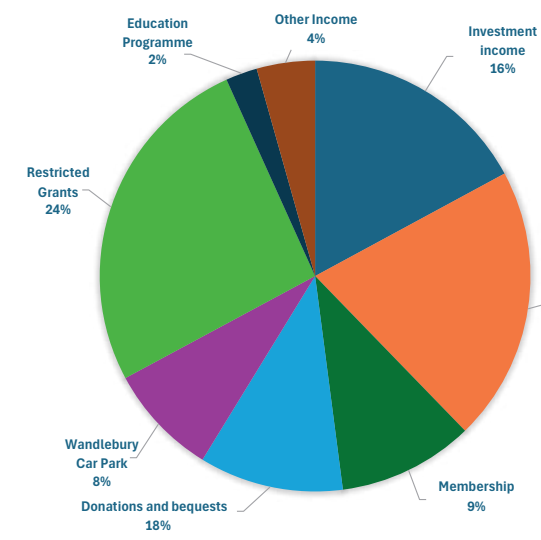
Our investment properties were formally revalued as at 31 March 2024 (2023-24 losses £127k) and took into account tenancies in place. Trustees agreed not to revalue this year as markets had not significantly moved.

Losses on our other investments were £103k (2023-24 gain £183k).

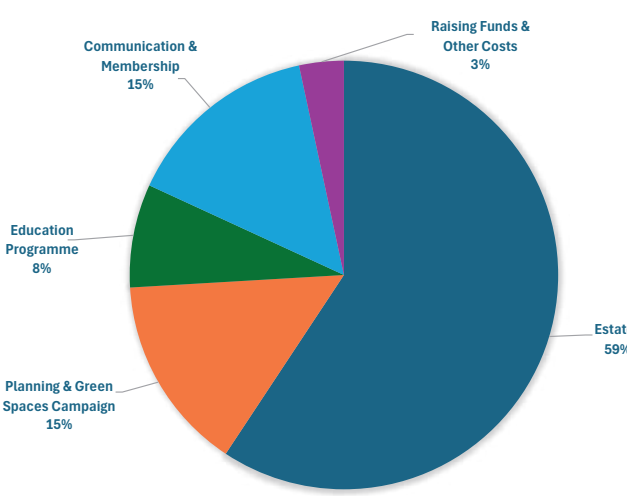
Please view our full audited financial statements here: <https://cambridgeppf.org/our-governance>

As the charts below show, we are fortunate to have a broad income base, and most of our funds are spent on the heritage assets in our care

Income Sources 2024-25



Charitable Expenditure by Activity 2024-25



Reserves at 31 March 2025

Fixed Asset Reserve Fund – £1.354m (2023-24 £1.238m)

Represents our heritage buildings, green spaces and other fixed assets, which are central to our mission though not spendable.

Strategic Property Reserve – £5.208m (2023-24 £5.208m)

Properties linked to our heritage sites, so they are not held purely for financial purposes

General Reserves – £3.271m (2023-24 £3.339m)

These are what we consider our “free” reserves, and our policy is to prudently retain approximately £337k in liquid funds for working capital, which represents around 6 months expenditure. The balance is invested on a medium-to-high risk strategy to generate income to fund the charity's work. At the end of the year, we were holding a larger than usual amount of cash, £304k of this is restricted funding not yet spent, £41k is held on behalf of River Cam CAN partners, and £176k invested in high interest accounts in order to generate income to support our work.

Restricted and Designated Funds

Restricted funds where the use is restricted in accordance with the donor's wishes totalled £337k (2023-24 £239k); designated funds include the Callan Fund £847k, Estate Improvement Fund £195k, and Leper Chapel & Barnwell Meadows Fund £106k.

Financial Position & Plans

CPPF's financial position remains solid, supported by steady investment returns and prudent management and we are well placed to deliver lasting impact for people, nature and the heritage of greater Cambridge. However, raising sufficient funds remains a significant challenge to cover both the rising operating costs of the charity and to meet the increasing needs of greater Cambridge for genuinely sustainable growth and more and better green space.

We are incredibly grateful to all those who have supported us financially and also for the time given by volunteers, their invaluable contribution though unrecorded in financial terms, greatly amplifies the impact shown in our accounts.

Our Board of Trustees

Guiding our work across all our charitable activities

Chair: Karen Rothwell

Karen was most recently Director of Fundraising and Marketing at Greenpeace UK, where she led a strategy that almost doubled the number of donors and income in 5 years. She has spent most of her career in conservation and environmental charities, with 10 years as Marketing Director at the RSPB and in a number of consultancy roles.

Honorary Treasurer: Paul Chapman until Nov 2024/Lesley Thompson from Nov 2024

Lesley is a Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants with over 30 years' senior experience across the Arts, Health and Higher Education sectors. Formerly Bursar of Lucy Cavendish College, Cambridge (2010-2023) and Chair of the University's Bursars' Committee.

Board members:

Brian Cleary is a former town planner specialising in Planning Appeal and Public Inquiry.

David Coomes is an ecologist working at the University of Cambridge.

Dame Polly Courtice was Founder Director of the University of Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership.

Cordelia Langford is a biologist and Director of Scientific Operations at the Wellcome Sanger Institute.

Caroline Stenner is a solicitor and former partner at Birketts LLP.

Kelcey Wilson-Lee is a historian and Director of Programmes at the Architectural Heritage Fund.

We thank our trustees for their guidance, expertise and commitment to our mission.

Our Staff & Volunteers

The people whose time, skills and care make our work possible

Volunteers

Volunteers are essential to our work, generously giving their time, expertise and enthusiasm across every part of our organisation. From trustees who guide our governance to people caring for our green spaces or welcoming visitors to our historic sites, their contribution shapes everything we do.

There is no way that we could carry out all of our charitable work without their help and support and we cannot thank them enough for all that they do for our charity. Over 200 people volunteered their time during the year, some of whom have dedicated weeks of work for the charity.

We always need more volunteers and welcome anyone who can spare some time to do so.

Finance Committee

Sally Adelman, Paul Chapman (Chair until Nov 2024), John Moore, Karen Rothwell, Christopher Spokes (until Aug 2024 and Lesley Thompson (Chair from Jan 2025).

Planning & Development of Greater Cambridge

David Adamson, Dinah Brooks, Brian Cleary, Baroness Janet Cohen, Patsy Dell, Donald Douglas, Edward Leigh, Dr Robin Pellew, Peter Studdert, Richard Townley and Bill Wicksteed.

Heritage Watch Group

Wendy Andrews, Michael Goodhart, Dr John Gray, Lucy Gray, Penny Heath, Prof Peter Landshoff and John Preston.

Cambridge & District Blue Plaques

Jonathan Barker, Tom Bygott, Julia Eisen, Cllr Corine Garvey, Penny Heath (Chair), Jonathan Hurst, Glenys Jackson and Honor Ridout.

Staff

Chief Executive Officer: James Littlewood

Finance/Company Secretary (PT 0.6): Ceri Littlechild (until Sept 2024) and then Angela Shaw (from Feb 2025).

Fundraising Manager (PT 0.6): Rachel French (until June 2024) and then Camilla Iturra

Memberships & Communications Manager (PT 0.7): Louise Palmer-Masterton

Principal Planning Officer (PT 0.6): Sarah Nicholas

Cambridge Nature Network Officer: Penelope Chaney

Education & Events Coordinator/Administration Officer: Nicola Spurling

Administration Assistant (PT 0.6): Gayle Sullivan (until Sept 2024), Fleur Harker from Oct 2024)

Estate Manager: Allan Scott-Davies (from Dec 2024)

Countryside Manager: Ed Wombwell

Senior Warden: James Allsop

Wardens: Hannah Warren, Jess Norris, Thev Cram (PT 0.6) & James Murray-White (PT 0.2)

Our school and group visit programme at Wandlebury Country Park is supported by a freelance Education Advisor and a team of freelance fieldwork teachers. We are also supported by professional external contractors, including land and property agent, book-keeping and IT.

Cambridge Past, Present & Future

Wandlebury Country Park

Gog Magog Hills,
Cambridge, CB22 3AE

Registered Charity No. 204121

Email: enquiries@cambridgeppf.org

Web: www.cambridgeppf.org

Tel: 01223 243 830

