Annual Report 2025-26

Prestwood Nature is a registered charity (charity no 1114685). Our primary object is to enhance the quality of the natural environment through the involvement of local people in the area around Prestwood, Great Missenden and the Kingshills. Prestwood Nature has restored and/or helps manage several local nature sites and engages local people with nature by organising guided nature walks, talks and other nature events and by surveying and recording local nature. Our members receive a monthly update email and a quarterly online member newsletter, reporting our activities throughout the year. Our Council (also known as the Board of Trustees) meets regularly to ensure good governance. We are funded by membership fees, donations, occasional legacies and fundraising. More information about Prestwood Nature can be found on our website (www.prestwoodnature.org) or via our social media accounts on Instagram (@prestwoodnature.org) and Facebook (Prestwood Nature). This report summarises our work from October 2025 to September 2026 and our financial statements for the financial year from April 2025 to March 2026. We report this way to provide the most up to date information on our nature conservation activities at our AGM in November.

1 OUR WORK IN 2025/26: SITES WE HELP MANAGE FOR NATURE

Prestwood Nature currently actively looks after three sites: Boug's Meadow in Great Missenden and Kiln Common Orchard and the Pollinator Friendly Garden in Prestwood. The work at these sites is organised and carried out by our volunteers at regular work parties.

A) BOUG'S MEADOW

Across the year our volunteers contribute much to the success of Prestwood Nature's site in Great Missenden, so loved by the wider community. Across thirteen work parties (Oct 25-Sept 26), some 250 volunteer hours have been invested in the maintenance of the wildflower meadow, copse, hedging and the channel of the winterbourne running through the site. This does not however include Colin Tyler's tireless work to delineate the paths, from No Mow May into the summer, to reconstruct and reinstall the damaged information board, and to make major repairs to a bench.

Our open day on Sunday 5th July was well-attended and served to reconnect us with other local conservation groups as well as highlighting the site to newcomers; many from the nearby Coopers Market on the High Street. Conversations with visitors about how to promote a wildflower meadow at home and getting younger people interested in nature are always encouraging. The meadow bloomed with at least 30 different wildflowers, with 15 different butterflies sighted that week.

Towards the end of 2025, Bougs' volunteers again joined Santa and the Rotary Club to fundraise and bring Christmas cheer to Prestwood and Great Missenden. In March, members of Pipers Corner School joined us to plant a hedge funded by the activities of its student group 'HOPE' (Helping Others Protect the Environment). The summer of 2026 was extremely challenging for new plants on site, along with many of our older trees; with no less than five heatwaves. We commissioned a survey of all the trees on site so that we can ensure they remain safe. Going forward, our hope will be to ensure the site can adapt to extreme heat and drought to continue to support wildlife in 2027 and beyond.

B) KILN COMMON ORCHARD

Kiln Common Orchard is a community orchard planted by Prestwood Nature in 2008, containing heritage fruit trees typical of the area. The trees and the meadow below provide shelter and food for birds and invertebrates. Prestwood Nature volunteers mow the orchard and prune the trees, coordinated by Karen van Oostrum and James Appleby.

In 2026 the orchard had a decrease in fruit output from the previous year, as anticipated. This is because most of the trees experience biennial bearing. This term describes the on-off pattern of fruit-bearing, a phenomenon most common in apples

and pears. Because last year was an “on” year, when the trees produced a bumper harvest, they have fewer resources the following year and consequently produce less fruit. Those fruit that are produced are often smaller too. This pattern was less pronounced with the plums, with some trees producing a similar amount of fruit to previous years.

Another problem facing this year’s harvest was the abundance of codling moth larvae. These voracious caterpillars got to many of the apples while they were still on the trees, spoiling of the fruit. That being said, Prestwood Nature is an environmental group, and codling moths are a part of the wider ecosystem. We made sure to gather up all the rotten apples and distribute them around the base of the trees – as food for animals and as fertiliser for the trees to support next year’s harvest.

C) POLLINATOR FRIENDLY GARDEN



Peacock caterpillars on nettles (Karen van Oostrum)

This year we continued to focus on providing foliage for the larval forms of our pollinators, as well as forage for the adult stages, in the form of pollen and nectar from the flowers. A good population of peacock butterfly caterpillars was seen on the nettles in early June. The subsequent heat and drought were a real test for the plants within the Garden. We only water very occasionally, and when we do, it is limited and targeted to help new plants establish, using water collected in our on-site water butts. Despite the environmental stresses, the plants performed remarkably well, and the garden was alive with buzzing and fluttering.

2. OUR WORK IN 2025/26: COMMUNITY NATURE EVENTS

Each year Prestwood Nature organises nature events for the local community, with the aim of encouraging local people to engage with local nature and to value and protect it. In 2025/26 we organised 11 events, walks and talks, as follows:

- A talk at the AGM (10th November 2025) by Mike Collard from the Bucks Owl and Raptor Group
- Jointly with Wild Amersham, an online talk by Simon Nicholls on garden birds, to coincide with the RSPB's Big Garden Birdwatch (23rd January 2026)
- A talk by Jim Conboy and Carol-Anne O'Callaghan from the Leather Lane Conservation Group about their battle to save the oaks and the bats at Leather Lane (2nd March 2026)
- A Dawn Chorus walk led by Simon Nicolls (2nd May 2026)
- Four Botany walks led by Karen van Oostrum; an Autumn walk in Great Hampden on 5th October 2025 and three walks in Prestwood for Spring, Summer and Autumn 2026 (22nd March, 28th June and 27th September).
- An open day event at Bougs Meadow, 'Midsummer in the Meadow', (5th July 2026)
- Jointly with Great Missenden Village Association, two walks along the winterbourne section of the River Misbourne in Great Missenden to introduce the Mending the Misbourne project, led by Trish Mallett and Karen van Oostrum. These covered the geology and ecology of winterbournes and the importance of eradicating invasive non-native species near the river.

Unfortunately, the planned Orchard Day event at Kiln Common Community Orchard in October 2025 had to be cancelled at short notice due to adverse weather conditions.



PN Trustee Caroline Greenwood at Midsummer in the Meadow (Alice Griffiths)

3. OUR WORK IN 2025/26: RECORDING LOCAL NATURE

3.1 Butterfly Transect 2026

This is the first year of a new butterfly transect focused on the Prestwood Local Nature Reserve. The transect uses Butterfly Conservation methodology and the route is walked each week, weather permitting, from 1 April through to the end of September. Twelve volunteers took part this year.

In total, 1456 butterflies were recorded across 25 species. The table below shows the top ten butterfly species in terms of overall numbers recorded.

Species	**Total number recorded in 2026**
Meadow Brown	380
Gatekeeper	220
Marbled White	151
Common Blue	149
Small White	85
Ringlet	76
Small Heath	64
Large White	60
Brimstone	37
Speckled Wood	36

The weather has had a significant impact on butterfly sightings across the UK this year. A warm spring with a cold damp start to June was then followed by an extreme heatwave and drought. These conditions have had different impacts on our butterfly species. Butterfly Conservation has reported higher numbers of migrant butterflies than usual, such as Painted Lady and the biggest influx of Clouded Yellow seen for years. Results of the Big Butterfly Count for the Painted Lady were up 335% vs last year. Although neither butterfly reached our top ten, Painted Lady was reported in six individual weeks, and Clouded Yellow reported in five separate weeks, an incredible finding compared to our previous local transect when a single sighting of Clouded Yellow in the year was recorded in 2 years out of 20.



Clouded yellow on scabious (Anne Evans)

An interesting sighting of a second brood Dingy Skipper was recorded in early August. This butterfly is usually on the wing in May-June, but a good summer in southern England has been known to result in a partial second brood in late July-August. This second brood is the norm in Southern Europe and may become more frequent here with a changing climate.

There is no doubt that the exceptionally warm, sunny weather we have experienced this year has resulted in high counts of butterflies and longer flight seasons, but the associated drought may have been bad for caterpillar survival and could produce a delayed population decline in 2027. Butterfly Conservation's current warning is that the full biological impact of the 2026 drought may only become apparent during 2027 and beyond.

3.2 Prestwood Nature iRecord Activity

The Prestwood Nature iRecord Activity is an initiative set up in 2022 to make our records immediately accessible at a local and national level. The data is kept secure and regularly backed up by the Biological Records Centre.

In the year up to 31 August 2026, a further 382 records were added directly to the Activity. Over 90% of the records were butterflies and moths reflecting the interests of the recorders.

Of particular note are the numbers of migrant Hummingbird hawkmoths (*Macroglossum stellatarum*) reported this year as a result of the weather conditions.

A Green Crab-spider (*Diaea dorsata*) was seen at the Prestwood LNR, along with its recently caught meal.



Hummingbird Hawkmoth (Anne Evans)



Green Crab Spider (Anne Evans)

A Striped Lychnis (*Cucullia lychnitis*) caterpillar was found on a *Verbascum chaixii* garden cultivar. This 'Nationally Scarce' moth normally uses Dark Mullein (*Verbascum nigrum*) as its foodplant. A Purple Hairstreak butterfly (*Favonius quercus*) was seen briefly in early August nectaring on a garden buddleia, presumably a visitor from nearby oak trees.

Establishing the Prestwood Nature Activity in iRecord has also enabled us to view all records deposited by recorders in our geographical area. Currently, over 31,000 records representing over 2000 species are available and searchable on the Prestwood Nature website.



Purple Hairstreak (Chris Priestley)

4. OUR WORK IN 2024/25: COMMUNICATING ABOUT NATURE

Emails and newsletters

Members receive four seasonal *PN News* newsletters and monthly update emails with information about the charity's local activities (past and future) and other local events, national nature stories and progress at PN's three active conservation sites. Thank you to everyone who contributed articles and so many fantastic images!

Social media

Regular social media posts share the charity's news – from the Newsletters – about volunteering, local nature and PN events via *Prestwood Nature's Facebook page*, *the Prestwood Nature Facebook Group* and other local groups including *Your Prestwood and Great Missenden Facebook Group* (membership 8,600).

Posts from PN's Instagram account *@prestwoodnature* mirror those on Facebook.

The success of social media is largely determined by algorithms and so we would encourage members to follow along on either platform to help promote awareness of PN's posts and, therefore, PN's work in the local area.

Communication: engaging a wider local audience in nature conservation

2025 Christmas Tree Festival



Fungi themed Christmas tree (Alice Griffiths)

Once again PN decorated a tree at St Peter and St Paul's Christmas tree festival in Great Missenden – an event that was well attended by local people. PN's 2025 theme was 'Fungi' and the tree featured images of fungi alongside homemade fungi-themed decorations, which led to many conversations about interesting fungi visitors had seen in the area and why it had been such a good year for fungi.

NoMowMay

The Plantlife initiative supporting wildflowers and pollinators dubbed 'No Mow May' was again a focus for PN's social media efforts and other publicity in late April and May. At the end of May a survey of front gardens led to the presentation of PN's 'Certificates of Participation' to many local households and some useful conversations about managing gardens for wildlife.

5. OUR WORK IN 2025/26: WORKING WITH OTHERS

5.1 Prestwood Local Nature Reserve

Prestwood Local Nature Reserve is managed by the Chiltern Society. Prestwood Nature has been involved in monitoring and surveying the site for many years, and our new Butterfly Transect route is focussed exclusively on this site. Volunteers from Prestwood Nature help with maintenance tasks from time to time.

5.2 Holy Trinity Church

Holy Trinity Church in Prestwood once again asked for our help to maintain the wildlife friendly management of the churchyard. Prestwood Nature volunteers are due to join volunteers from the church in a work party in October to rake off the arisings from the annual cut of the wildflower area and cut back brambles around the gravestones.

5.3 Prestwood Community Association (PCA).

<u>Prestwood Big Week 2026</u>

The evening of Wednesday 17th June brought perfect weather and a very good turnout for the village walk, part of Prestwood's Big Week celebrations. We followed a circular route of just 1.6 miles along the lanes and field margins to the north-west of the village, with Karen van Oostrum sharing botanical and geological insights along the way. Near the end of the walk, we stopped at the Pollinator-Friendly Garden, introducing more local people to this tranquil site at the edge of the village. Thank you to everyone who came.



Village walk at the PFG (PCA with permission)



Prestwood Nature stall at Prestfest (Alice Griffiths)

We also had a Prestwood Nature stall at Prestfest on Prestwood Common at the end of Big Week, with displays about our work and activities for children. The event was very well attended, and we were able to engage a lot of local people to raise the profile of Prestwood Nature sites and discuss wildlife. The children loved looking at insects under the microscope.

Sheepwash Pond

Prestwood Nature volunteers supported Prestwood Community Association at two community clear-up mornings at Sheepwash Pond in Autumn 2025 and Spring 2026, cutting back overgrown vegetation, removing brambles, nettles and litter and restoring access around the pond.

5.4 Little Missenden Parish Council

A local parish councillor in Little Kingshill sought advice from Prestwood Nature about improving diversity on Little Kingshill Common. This advice was then incorporated into the Parish Council's 5-year plan for the management of green spaces in their care. The first stage of this was to rope off an area of grass at the back of the common and leave it to grow long this summer to see what wildflowers appeared.

5.5 Great Missenden Village Association (GMVA) and Mending the Misbourne

GMVA and Prestwood Nature have formed a working group to promote local engagement with "Mending the Misbourne", a newly funded 5-year programme run by the Chilterns National Landscape. We have escorted the project co-ordinator on a walk to show her the Winterbourne section of the river and organised 2 walks to introduce local people to the project and seek views on potential improvements. We have also identified local volunteers to be involved in monitoring the river flow and invertebrate populations in what is a rare and ecologically interesting habitat on our doorstep.

6. PRESTWOOD NATURE MEMBERSHIP

Household membership (Family and individual subscribers) has remained reasonably steady over the year, with new joiners balancing out those who did not renew their membership. Membership for the 2026/27 year stands at 93 households (167members) at the time of writing, seven months into the membership year.

7. PRESTWOOD NATURE GOVERNANCE

Prestwood nature is run by a Council comprising four officer posts plus up to eight ordinary members. No one volunteered to fill the Chair and Vice-Chair positions in 2025/6, so these remain vacant. Council members have taken it in turns to chair the meetings, which has worked well. Council membership as at the end of September 2026 was:

- Frances Rawle (General Secretary)
- Tony Marlow (Treasurer)
- James Appleby
- Alice Griffiths
- Caroline Greenwood
- Nick Hardy
- Karen van Oostrum

Caroline Greenwood volunteered to become a trustee after the last AGM and was co-opted by the other Council members in accordance with Prestwood Nature's constitution. She will be standing for formal election by the full membership at the 2026 AGM. New volunteers to fill the vacancies on Council would be very welcome.

8. FINANCE

8.1 Financial report

Prestwood Nature has low running costs thanks to the hard work of its many volunteers and the kindness of event leaders who often charge no fee or give a discount. Our income is mainly from membership fees, event donations and the sale of cards, booklets and cakes at our events, and occasional large donations. We received the final payment of a generous legacy from a former volunteer this year, which boosted our income and meant our finances remained in a very strong position at the end of the financial year. Our total receipts for the year were £4,535.04 and our total expenditure was £2,317.01, giving a surplus of £2,218.03. Funds available at year end to be carried forward to the 2026/2027 financial year were £12,110.65. The financial report (kindly examined once again by Steve Adkins, pro bono) is set out in Appendix 1.

8.2 Small grant scheme

In September 2026 the Council agreed to allocate the first funding under our small grants scheme, to fund Riverfly monitoring training for 4 volunteers planning to work with the Mending the Misbourne project to monitor the invertebrates in the winterbourne section of the River Misbourne near Great Missenden. We have unfortunately had no other applications under this scheme to date, despite increased efforts to publicise it.

9. CHALLENGES AND PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

Despite the lack of a Chair and the vacancies on the Council we have managed to maintain good governance and run all the usual events during the year, as well as develop and strengthen new collaborations. Nevertheless, we would very much welcome more volunteers to become Trustees to help share the workload and give us more capacity to take on new initiatives, and a new Chair to help provide strategic leadership. We plan to continue developing relationships with community groups in the

villages in the area we cover, to work in partnership with other wildlife and conservation interest groups locally, and to increase our engagement with children and young people.

We have unfortunately experienced increased problems with litter at Bougs Meadow this summer, probably because more people have been using the site in the warm weather. There has also been some vandalism there, including two incidents of fire damage to the picnic table. Volunteers assiduously clear litter at work parties and on passing visits; all members are asked to encourage anyone they see using any of our Prestwood Nature sites to take their litter away with them.

10. THANK YOU

Thank you very much to all the people who gave their time, energy and expertise to make the work of Prestwood Nature possible this year. Thank you to all the volunteers who help to look after our sites, to everyone who attended our events, and to all our members who contribute ideas, photos, articles and – importantly - their membership fees to cover our ongoing running costs. Thank you to all our partner organisations who provide speakers, attend or help run events, publish information, give advice or practical tools and materials, and so much more. And thank you to our Council members for all the hard work they do in planning & coordinating the work Prestwood Nature does and making sure we continue to deliver on our purposes as a charity.

Appendix 1

Accounts for 1 April 2025-31 March 2026

Prestwood Nature- Conservation Group for the Prestwood Region
Receipts & Payments Report for the year ended 31st March 2026

Receipts for the period				Expenses for the period			Outcome	Outcome
2026	2025			2026	2025	2026	2025
£	£			£	£	£	£
			Governance and General Expenses			S/(D)	S/(D)
1,001.24	1,201.24		Public liability insurance	131.04	131.04		
150.66	114.70		Website & hosting costs	30.82	30.82		
89.79	110.98		Zoom	155.88	155.88		
253.93	531.58		Online Membership system	95.00	95.00		
	62.15		Council review (inc.survey, hall hire)				
217.50	216.77		Sumup card reader				
			Misc stationery & display items	123.51			
			Card materials				
121.55				536.25	412.74		
	977.00		**AGM expenses**				
600.00			AGM hall hire	39.69	32.40		
2,100.37	2,041.96		AGM refreshments and flowers	44.00			
				83.69	32.40		
4,535.04	***5,256.38***			619.94	445.14	***3,915.10***	***4,811.24***
			Events & Education				
			Talks & Speaker fees/expenses	340.98	413.00		
			Tables, banners, gazebo etc	317.99	12.91		
			Plants for PCA planters	257.33			
				916.30	425.91	(916.30)	(425.91)
			Kiln Common Orchard & Pollinator Friendly Garden				
			Interpretation board		1,716.00		
			Pruning, MSOG membership & Misc		569.24		
			Compost bin materials	208.50			
				208.50	2,285.24	(208.50)	(2,285.24)
			Boug's Meadow				
			Hedgerow plants and misc	398.30			
			National Meadow Day expenses		42.00		
			Furniture		1,000.00		
				398.30	1,042.00	(398.30)	(1,042.00)
			Chalk, Cherries & Chairs projects				
			Butterfly charts, PN tree booklets	173.97	34.50		
				173.97	34.50	(173.97)	(34.50)
4,535.04	5,256.38		**TOTAL EXPENDITURE FOR YEAR**	**2,317.01**	4,232.79	2,218.03	1,023.59
2,218.03	1,023.59						
			Funds carried forward to Next Year				
9,892.62	8,869.03		Bank account Lloyds	7,110.65	9,892.62		
-	-		CAF 60 Interest bearing deposit account	5,000.00	0.00		
9,892.62	8,869.03			12,110.65	9,892.62		
14,427.66	**14,125.41**		**SUM**	**14,427.66**	**14,125.41**		

I have examined the receipts and payments account for the year 2025 / 26. I find the accounts in good order and expenditures under control. A surplus is being maintained and funds are being effectively invested. The retained funds are on the large side relative to average expenditures.

Steve Adkins Qualified Management Accountant. 20th July 2026