

2025

annual update
report



Bird Wise
EAST KENT



Thank you for wising up to bird disturbance

A MESSAGE FROM THE PROJECT MANAGER



Hi everyone,

My name is Gregory Bessant, and I've been part of the Bird Wise East Kent team for several years, now stepping into the role of Project Manager.

This season has brought several changes to our team structure once again. Our Engagement Officer, Jasmine, has moved on to an exciting new role with the White Cliffs Countryside Partnership, closer to where she lives. This meant we were short-staffed for a short period; however, we have now welcomed two new Engagement Officers, Sam and Richard, to the team. It's been a year of change, but both have already brought fresh energy, creativity, and enthusiasm to help strengthen our engagement and make a real difference.

Despite the challenges of operating with fewer team members for a time, we have delivered or participated in 139 events, reaching over 10,769 people. These included our popular Photography Competition, continued collaboration with the Thanet Coast Project, and our usual series of pit stops and outreach activities.

Our Photography Competition saw a fantastic increase in engagement this year compared to previous years. The exhibition alone attracted an impressive 4,621 interactions, making it our most successful annual event and an incredible opportunity to connect people with the local coastline and its wildlife.

We continue to prioritise three key sites that are particularly sensitive to disturbance and vital for bird populations — Pegwell Bay, the Wantsum Stretch, and Long Rock. These areas attract large visitor numbers and provide important roosting and nesting habitats, both currently and historically.

Our education and outreach work has remained strong, with school visits, Brownie and college sessions, and events such as walks and talks, presentations, stalls, and the Photography Exhibition all helping to inspire and inform local communities.

Here's to another impactful and rewarding season ahead!

Gregory Bessant

ONLINE MEDIA

The online media has shown a small decrease as the one viral video caused everything to inflte and we are now just seeing less interacrction comparted to the prevoius year bevcause of this.

Website & Social Media

Over the past year, we've seen a decline in interactions across most of our platforms, although some social media channels still maintain high engagement. We continue to have the most-followed SAMMs Project in the UK on Instagram, which remains a strong asset. As always, engagement levels vary between platforms due to differing algorithms — what performs well on one may not necessarily work on another.

We've stepped back from Twitter (X) due to ongoing controversies. The account remains active for now, and we are monitoring developments closely while observing the actions of other organisations. If it becomes relevant to resume posting, we are in a position to do so.

TikTok and YouTube have not been priorities, as both require consistent content input to build and maintain engagement. We hope to strengthen our presence on these platforms in the future, if the level of interest proves worthwhile.

Social Media Reach

76.1k



245.4k

24 Follows



40 Follows

784



@BirdWiseEK

ON SITE ENGAGEMENT

Every engagement is a valuable opportunity to connect with the public, aiming to do more than just say hello. It's about increasing awareness and encouraging support for the project.

Printed Media and Interpretative Signage

We are reviewing all printed media to make it more engaging and easier to understand. With experienced Engagement Officers now in place, we're improving how we design and present materials. We're also learning from other SAMMs projects and sharing our own successes to strengthen collective impact.

A key focus is creating interactive resources for dog walkers, as reducing disturbance to wildlife remains a high priority.

So far, most of our signage has been generic and replaceable. Going forward, we plan to install more permanent, site-specific signs that offer year-round education, tailored to each location and species.

The volume of printed materials shared through our events highlights the broad reach and effectiveness of our public engagement work.



Turnstone Sign
Viking Bay



Bird Wise New Team



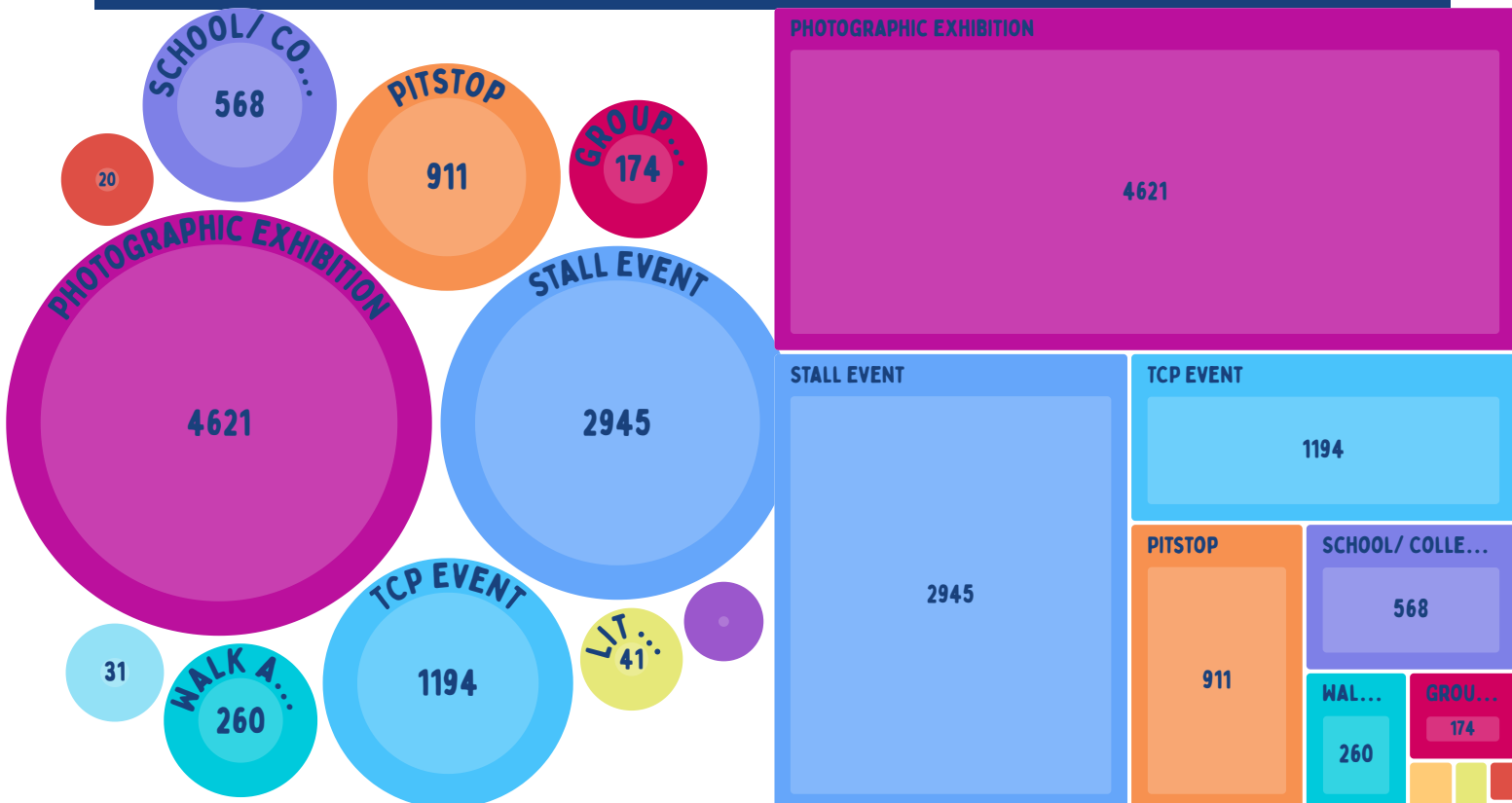
NE Sign

Thanet Coast
Project Event



ON SITE ENGAGEMENT

Through school visits, pit stops, and social media, we have successfully engaged a wide range of coastal users over the past year.



Number of Events

Total - 139

Event Attendees

Total - 10,769



MONITORING BIRD NUMBERS

Winter Wading survey 2025 January and February

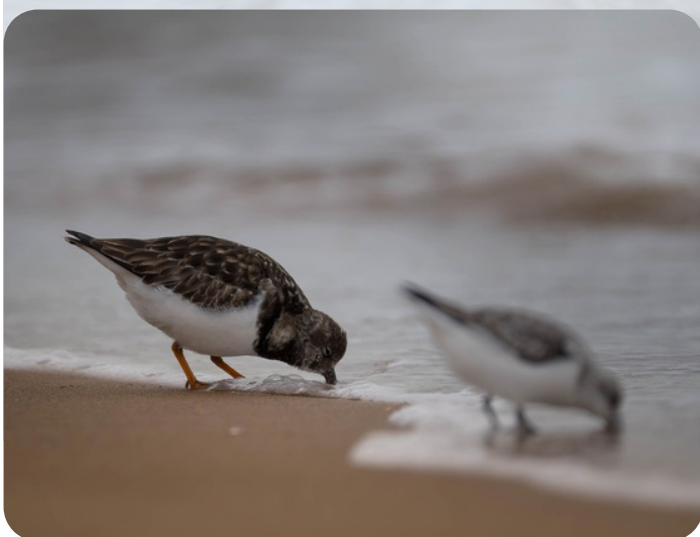
Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory Trust Bi Annual Winter Wading Bird Survey

All wading bird species and Brent Geese are included in the total count for the Daring Dozen.

In 2025, there was a noticeable decline in numbers during both survey months. In January 2024, 5,080 wading birds were recorded across 15 species, and in February 2024, 4,491 birds were recorded across 14 species. In comparison, January 2025 saw 3,454 birds across 16 species, and February 2025 recorded 3,747 birds across 16 species.

The results from these surveys highlight three key sites in need of increased education and engagement efforts: Pegwell Bay, the Wantsum Stretch (Plumpudding), and Long Rock. Additionally, high bird numbers in Margate and Broadstairs suggest that these high-footfall areas also require focused attention from the project.

While year-to-year fluctuations in bird numbers are expected, these repeated decreases suggest a growing trend across multiple species. This reinforces the importance of this project and others like it, particularly in raising awareness and supporting the long-term protection of coastal bird populations through public education.



BUDGET

The accumulated funding continues to support day-to-day activities.

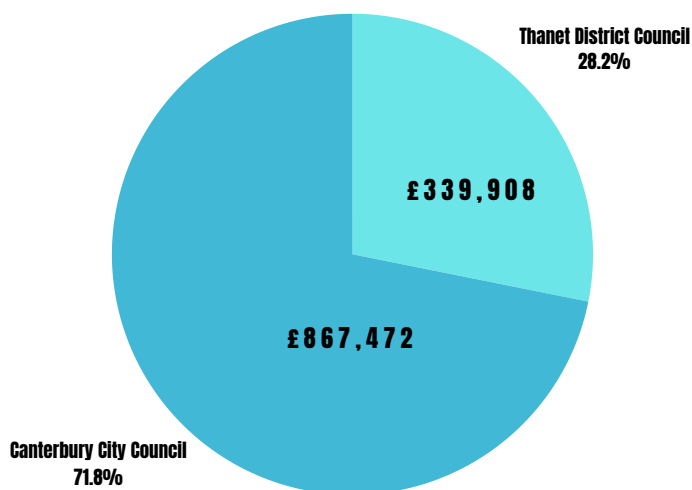
Use of Budget

The project budget has been primarily allocated to staffing, funding two dedicated Engagement Officers and a Project Lead who deliver public engagement, events, and outreach across the East Kent coastline. This core team is vital to the ongoing success of the project.

A significant portion of the budget has also supported day-to-day delivery — including the photography exhibition (covering printing, venue hire, and prizes), as well as large-scale leaflet production, interpretative signage, and other visual materials. These printed and visual resources play a crucial role in raising awareness and promoting responsible behaviour across key coastal areas.

Total expenditure for the 2024 to 2025 period of the Bird Wise East Kent project stands at £120,344. Contributions came from Canterbury City Council (£867,472) and Thanet District Council (£339,908). The lower contribution from Thanet reflects the higher amounts provided in the previous financial year and earlier years, as funds were accumulated to be transferred in larger lump sums.

The funds used are covered by the interest gained from the pot of S106 contributions gained over a number of years by both Councils.



ONGOING WORK

Engaging with people on the coast provides valuable feedback and allows us to deliver our services more effectively.

Future

With recent staffing changes including the loss of Jasmine and the addition of Sam and Richard as our new rangers we are well positioned to refocus on educating the public about bird disturbance. Their fresh ideas and approaches will help us better protect these species. The future looks promising with exciting new projects and initiatives that have the potential to elevate the Bird Wise project and advance our goals.

Engagement

Pit stops continue to be one of the most effective ways to reach people as they allow us to engage directly with those who have the greatest impact on coastal wildlife. Although the number of interactions may be smaller compared to some other activities or social media these face-to-face contacts are highly valuable. Using a variety of engagement methods is helping to raise awareness along the coast and within the ecological community making the project better known and increasing its overall impact.



COLLABORATION & COMMUNITY



Working with Other Organisations

We have been working with many organisations across East Kent and beyond to discover better techniques for educating and encouraging people about bird disturbance.

We have developed a closer partnership with Bird Wise North Kent, collaborating on events in our shared area of Whitstable, as well as working alongside other SAMMs projects across the UK. Conversations with other SAMMs groups have inspired us to create more graphics and events aimed at public education.

We continue to work very closely with Kent Wildlife Trust and Nina Jones at the Pegwell Bay site, collaborating on a variety of events throughout the year and into the future.

We also engage with many schools, colleges, and youth groups to encourage the younger generation. This includes visiting classrooms and inviting students to come to us along the coastline for onsite learning. Our partnership with the Thanet Coast Project remains strong, as we collaborate on events to ensure both of our goals are represented effectively.

We are fortunate to have excellent working relationships with many different projects, and these partnerships continue to grow each year. We would like to thank everyone who has supported and worked with us.



THE FUTURE

There is a very interesting time with some great projects lined up

Long Rock

We have continued our work at Long Rock, maintaining a strong presence to encourage people to stick to the paths and avoid the beach and surrounding areas, which are important breeding and roosting sites within the SSSI. This coming year will be our final year conducting surveys at the site, in collaboration with Huq Technology, to monitor where people are walking and track visitor numbers.

The Wantsum Stretch

We received exciting news with the highest known number of breeding wading species in the area, including Avocet, Oystercatcher, and Ringed Plover. Recent wader counts from Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory Trust confirm this as one of the most significant population areas within our catchment. We plan to focus on education and protection for these species while encouraging ways to increase biodiversity.

Pegwell Bay

Pegwell Bay holds the highest population of wading birds in our catchment and features the most sensitive habitat. We are exploring new ways to educate visitors and prevent disturbance to this site. We also plan to host more events to draw people to Pegwell Bay and teach them how to enjoy the area responsibly without harming the wildlife.



2025-2026

The next year will be prodomiately the same

Predicted spend for 2025-2026 will be around the same as 2025-2026 with a few new projects.

There a projects we want to look into with

- Volunteer scheme up and running would cost bit more to keep running - staff time, venue hiring and other expenses, uniform,-
- Plum pudding and Cold Harbour sections look into increasing the breeding and roosting sites with the fencing being replaced/ enhanced - materials will cost £4,000 the full cost is approximately £28,000.
- A new Engagement officer to keep up with the demand and increase of the populations living near the SPA -
- Long rock- have to have a look into

Looking forward to a productive year ahead!

