

# Biennial Review

2021 - 2023

**Cumbria Biodiversity Data Centre (CBDC) is a not-for-profit organisation that brings together and manages information on Cumbria’s natural history. It does this by:**

- **working with the biological and geological recording communities, including local and national experts, to collect the data and ensure that it is robust.**
- **making information available to a range of people including the public, researchers, ecologists and decision makers.**
- **providing a range of data and information services to statutory bodies and local and national conservation organisations.**
- **delivering training and organising public events that raise awareness of Cumbria’s wonderful natural history.**

PHOTO CREDITS:

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## ABOUT US

Cumbria Biodiversity Data Centre (CBDC) collates, analyses and shares information on Cumbria’s natural history, wildlife sites and habitats for education, research and to help people make sound decisions when planning to develop and manage land sustainably.

CBDC is an independent initiative hosted by Tullie House Museum (Charity no: 1143235). Tullie House has held natural history records since 1902 when the Natural History Records Bureau was formed. The current governance structure for the CBDC was established in 2011. This was in response to organisations needing biodiversity data to meet their obligations under the National Park and Access to Countryside Act, Earth Summit 1992 and the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act of 2006.

Cumbria Biodiversity Data Centre is member of the Association of Local Environment Record Centres (ALERC) and the National Biodiversity Network (NBN).

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## INTRODUCTION TO THE BIENNIAL REPORT 2021-2023

This report covers the period 01 April 2021 to 31 March 2023 and reflects recovery from COVID-19 impacts and the development of the national biodiversity agenda, with Cumbria being selected as one of five pilots for the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS).

## BIODIVERSITY RECORDING

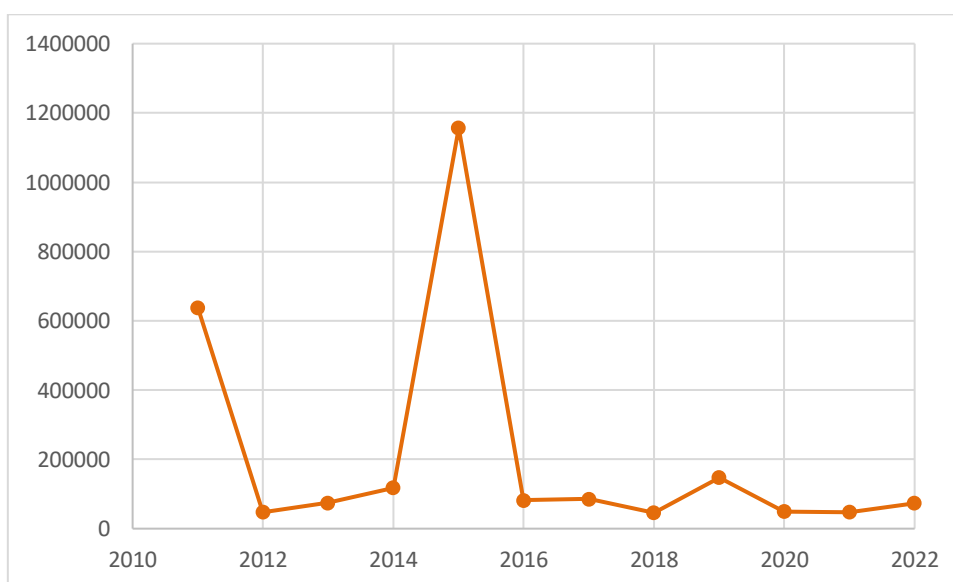
As stated in all previous reports, Cumbria Biodiversity Data Centre (CBDC) supports and promotes biological recording across the county via a number of different mechanisms from talks to recording groups and societies to organising recording events. Key to this is working with the volunteer recorders and recording groups who dedicate their time to observing and recording the natural history of Cumbria.

## RECORDS

In 2021 and 2022, CBDC received and processed more than 120,000 records collected by individual recorders either independently or as part of a recording scheme (including location specific recording, organisational schemes, national schemes, citizen science projects and many more). By the end of 2022, CBDC had 2.56 million records in the species database.

Once received, each record is checked for accuracy and uploaded to the CBDC database by the Recording Officer with the support of dedicated CBDC office volunteers and, more recently, recording assistant staff. Further verification of the data is carried out by county or national experts, who themselves are volunteers.

This period included records collected during and following COVID-19 lockdowns which saw an increase in independent surveys compared to large-scale group surveys. Data were received directly by CBDC but this period also saw a marked increase in the use of recording apps, building on the growth seen in previous years. In 2021, there were in excess of 34,800 Cumbrian species records submitted to iRecord, up from the 28,000 seen in 2020: this grew to more than 45,000 in 2022 before declining slightly to 43,400 in 2023.



*Figure 1: Annual species records processed into the CBDC database. While the number of records does vary from year to year (especially in 2015 due to two large taxon specific databases being received), the annual average is around 50,000-75,000.*

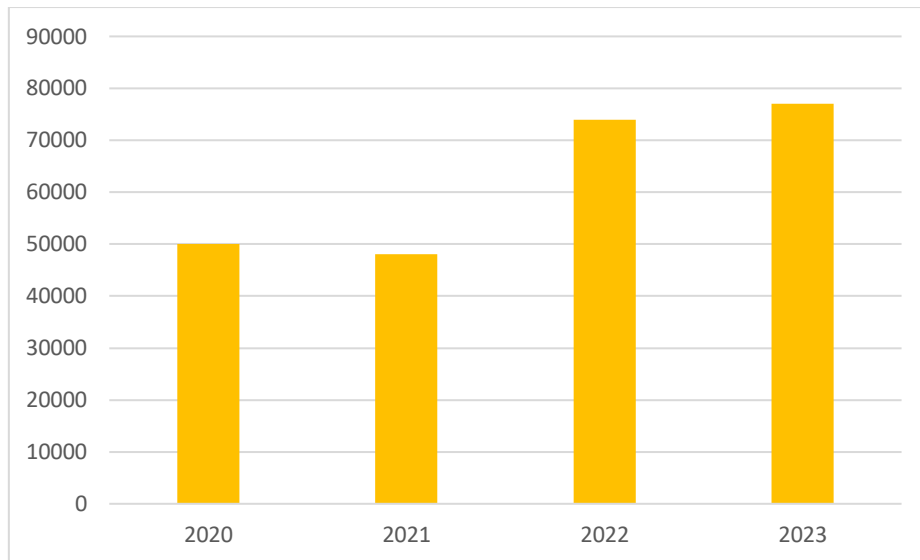


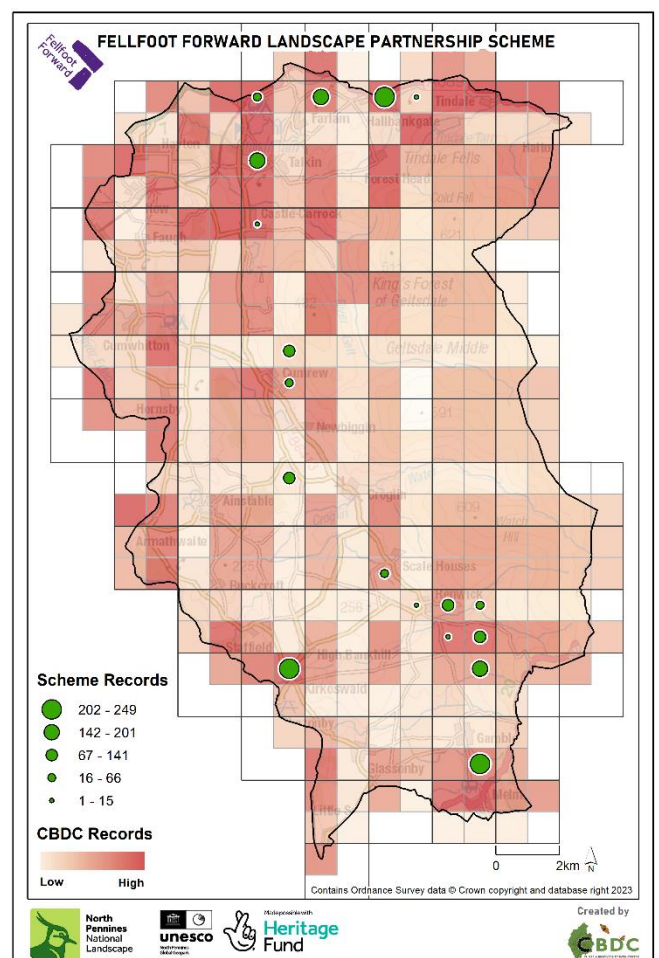
Figure 2: A focus on the reporting period shows an increase from 2021 to 2022 which was continued into 2023 and reflects an increase in ‘lockdown’ surveying.

### RECORDING DAYS AND COMMUNITY EVENTS

Recording Days in 2021 and 2022 were still largely impacted by COVID-19 restrictions. Nevertheless, a number were organised as part of the Fellfoot Forward project throughout 2022.

CBDC were a key partner on the Fellfoot Forward Landscape Partnership Scheme’s Citizen Science theme that sought to raise awareness, knowledge and develop field skills relating to the local wildlife habitats and species in the project area, the northern part of the Eden Valley. A total of ten training and recording sessions were organised between October 2021 and November 2022, with more planned for 2023. This included five training sessions, three fungi workshops, a ‘gardening for wildlife’ workshop and a farm recording day for CBDC recorders.

Figure 3: Species records collected as part of Fellfoot Forward Landscape Project Scheme (green spots) overlaid on existing records in the CBDC database (pink squares). Many of the new records were collected in areas with few existing records, as shown by paler squares.



Over 1,000 records were obtained from these various sessions with 73% being flowering plants records. Towards the end of the field season, CBDC worked with Cumbria Wildlife Trust as part of the Fellfoot Forward project to start surveying County Wildlife Sites in the area, with two sites surveyed in 2022.

Having taken on the leadership of the Cumbria Fungi Recording Group, the Recording Officer organised four fungal forays in 2021 and a further six in 2022. In 2021, these forays visited sites in Borrowdale, Penrith and Brampton. In 2022, venues included sites in or near Wigton, Armathwaite, Cliburn Moss, Smardale Gill, Brampton and Haverthwaite.



**Saturday**  
18 June  
12-11.30pm  
**Sunday**  
19 June  
7am-4pm

**Talkin Tarn**  
Tarn Road,  
Brampton CA8  
1HN



Fellfoot Forward is led by the North Pennines AONB Partnership and supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund.



In partnership with:



## Festival of Nature

Join us at Talkin Tarn for a weekend celebrating nature around the themes of water, woodland, and meadow, and connecting wildlife, people, and landscape.

- Guided walks
- Nature spotting tips
- Species identification – plants, invertebrates, birds and more
- Wildlife gardening tips
- Family games
- Pond dipping
- Sensory walk
- Arts and crafts
- Trail camera information
- Geology activities
- Bat walk
- Moth traps

For further information, visit [northpenninesaonb.org.uk/events/FestivalofNature](http://northpenninesaonb.org.uk/events/FestivalofNature) or scan the QR code:



CBDC were proud to co-project manage the first Festival of Nature at Talkin Tarn on 18-19 June 2022 (Figure 4). Forming part of the Fellfoot Forward initiative, the festival was a weekend of various activities taking place in and around the water, woodland and meadows of the country park at Talkin Tarn with an emphasis on connecting wildlife, people and landscape. Activities included guided walks, species identification, wildlife gardening sessions, family games, pond dipping along with bat walks, moth trapping and trail camera sessions, all forming part of a venue-wide bioblitz. A market square offered arts and crafts and general wildlife information with stands from a range of local organisations. The Festival involved 18 organisations who all helped to deliver activities to the public who attended the festival. Many Cumbrian recorders were involved in the event, leading on bioblitz related activities. The event engaged about 200 visitors, many participating in numerous events across the weekend. Given the success of the event, the intention was to organise a similar festival in 2023.

Figure 4: Festival of Nature poster

Cumbrian recorders also helped CBDC at other public events by leading bug hunts and guided walks. Examples in 2021 and 2022 included the Keswick Mountain Festival in September 2021 and Oak Tree Animal Rescue Bioblitz in May 2022.

## RECORDERS' CONFERENCE

CBDC supports the recording community by organising the Annual Cumbria Recorders' Conference. Following the success of the online conference in 2021, a second online conference was organised in early 2022 which included a range of "wildlife in 2021" highlight presentations

as well as updates on new projects taking place across the county and work being undertaken by CBDC.

In February 2023, a hybrid half-day conference was organised allowing recorders to attend the event at Tullie House or join via Zoom. This was the first in-person conference since 2020 and featured presentations from speakers on-line and in the Tullie lecture theatre. The conference was recorded and the recorded sessions have been made available to participants with the presentations available to all on the CBDC website. A total of 50 recorders attended with half in person and half on-line.

Presentations from both the 2022 and 2023 conferences are available from the CBDC website: <https://www.cbdc.org.uk/get-involved/recorders-conference/>

## **PUBLICATIONS**

In 2021, CBDC with Cumbria Mammal Group organised a harvest mouse survey across Cumbria to boost records of this priority species. With few records in Cumbria, recorders, residents and visitors were asked to look for these very small rodents and submit records to CBDC. A webpage was published on the CBDC website and is still seeking records: <https://www.cbdc.org.uk/wildlife-in-cumbria/harvest-mouse/>.

CBDC was a delivery partner in Cumbria Wildlife Trust's National Lottery Heritage Fund funded project Get Cumbria Buzzing. This very highly publicised project in North Cumbria sought to establish the status and distribution of bumblebees through recorder training and recording surveys as well as looking at raising awareness of pollinators and creating or restoring high quality habitat for wild pollinating species. The project led to the production of the Cumbria Bumblebee Atlas in 2022 which includes the 21 extant species and two presumed extinct species. The atlas was produced as a hard copy and can also be viewed on the CBDC website: <https://www.cbdc.org.uk/about-us/projects/bumblebee-atlas/>.

## **SUPPORTING RECORDING GROUPS**

CBDC continued to support local recording groups, societies and clubs. This takes different forms, from supporting development of publications to active participation in the councils/committees for these groups or involvement in the Recorders' Conferences.

In 2021, CBDC offered to lead the Cumbria Fungi Recording Group and organised four fungal forays in October and November 2021 as well as more events in Autumn 2022. These are described above.

## GEODIVERSITY RECORDING

CBDC is proud to support Cumbria GeoConservation by providing a web portal to their resources which include leaflets about particular geological sites and walks across the county. Cumbria GeoConservation volunteers regularly review geological sites for designation as Local Geological Sites (LGS), provide information to planners and others across the county regarding geological protection and help to promote geological understanding, particularly the importance of LGS as designated protected sites. For more information, please see [https://www.cbdc.org.uk/cumbria\\_geoconservation/](https://www.cbdc.org.uk/cumbria_geoconservation/)

Their regular surveys ensure that geodiversity data are made available to all who need them while also helping to promote the diverse array of geology that is evident across Cumbria. Over recent years, Cumbria GeoConservation have developed a number of geotrails that offer information and opportunities about Cumbrian geology. An example of one of the trails developed as part of the Westmorland Dales Project is provided in Figure 5 and are available from the Cumbria GeoConservation website on the CBDC site.

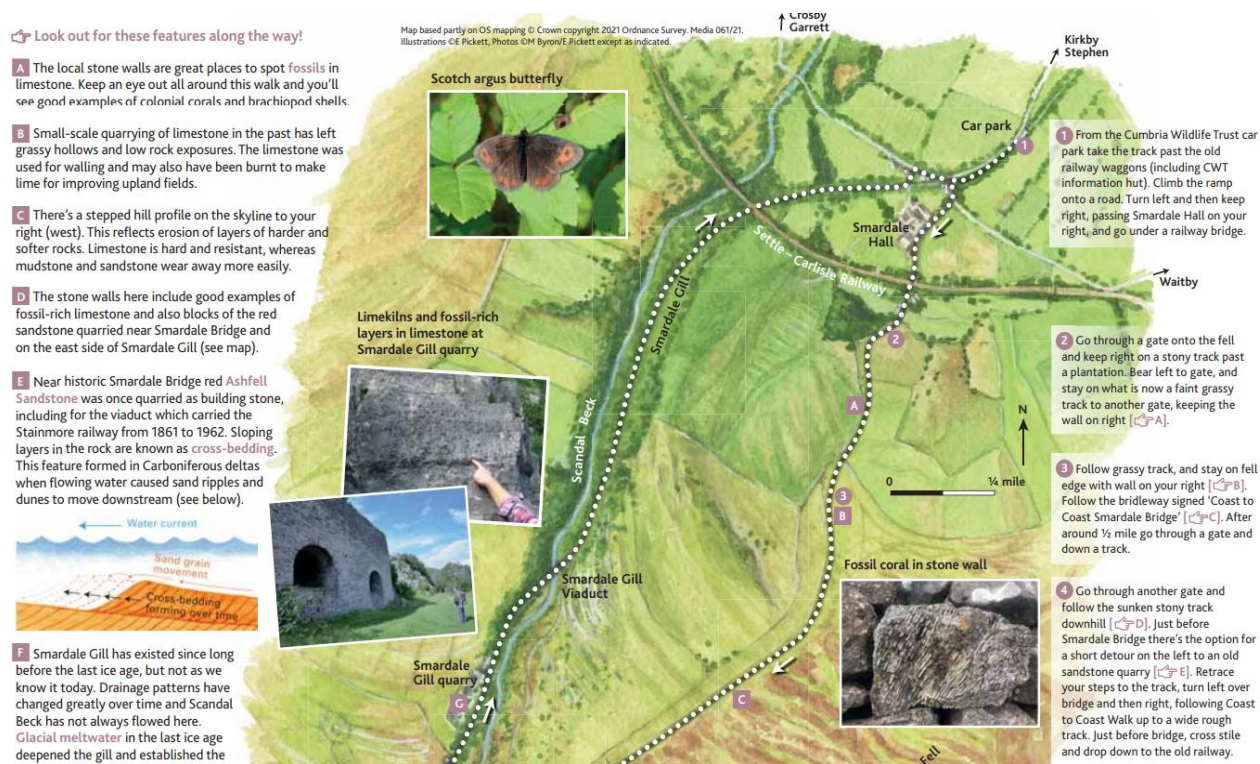


Figure 5: An example of one of the geological trails that Cumbria GeoConservation have produced as part of the Westmorland Dales Project.



## BIODIVERSITY ANALYSIS & INFORMATION

CBDC is always looking for opportunities to utilise the data we hold to better inform biodiversity decision making across Cumbria and how to link this to national projects with impacts on ecodiversity. Data are often provided to partners or as part of data requests with no further analysis required. Sometimes, however, we are involved in projects that require more intensive involvement such as help with mapping and modelling of data.

### CUMBRIA BIODIVERSITY EVIDENCE BASE

Species records received by CBDC are entered into the Recorder 6 database which stood at 2.56 million records on 31 March 2023 with additional information about sites and habitats available via the database and in different geopackages. Together, these constitute the Cumbria Biodiversity Evidence Base.

CBDC is very pleased to work with local and planning authorities through service level agreements which provide data to inform planning and development as well as other activities requiring biodiversity data such as nature recovery projects. The agreements last one year and provide two 6-monthly data updates in the form of the Cumbria Biodiversity Evidence Base.

### DATA SEARCHES AND REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

Data searches are either commercial searches required to support planning applications or for inclusion in environmental impact assessments, or non-commercial searches for local recorders, researchers and other non-commercial activity.

Commercial data searches are vital to the continued operation of CBDC, helping to fund our core services, and ensure that non-commercial requests can be provided free of charge.

In the 2021/22 financial year, 293 data search requests were received. Of these, 94% were commercial searches with the remainder coming from education/research, conservation partners and recording groups or the public.

For 2022/23, 354 data search requests were made, with 96% being commercial searches.

### DATA ANALYSIS PROJECTS

CBDC was involved in significant Cumbrian projects in 2021-2023 including but not limited to:

[Cumbria Local Nature Recovery Strategy Pilot](#): to test and help guide the development of Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) from 2023, as outlined in the Environment Act 2021 and the 25 Year Environment Plan (2018). DEFRA worked with five areas across England to test the LNRS concept and processes from October 2020 to May 2021. Cumbria County Council were commissioned by DEFRA to lead a partnership through the process of developing an LNRS. A draft LNRS was submitted to DEFRA in May 2021. Cumbria County Council worked with Cumbria

Biodiversity Data Centre (CBDC) and the Cumbria Local Nature Partnership (CLNP) to develop both a Cumbria Habitat Basemap, which shows existing habitat distribution to the best of our knowledge, and a Cumbria Habitat Networks Map, which identifies opportunities for creating linkages between existing habitat areas. Eventually these maps will be used as the ‘Spatial Plan’ or ‘Local Habitat Map’ within Cumbria’s Local Nature Recovery Strategy and will also help to guide the development of Cumbria’s Nature Recovery Network.

[Environmental Land Management Scheme \(ELMS\) test: “Forgotten Lands”](#): to explore approaches to encourage farmers to take part in mapping the natural capital of their farms. This involved mapping 21 farms in Cumbria, providing baseline information and creating online interactive maps to help farmers collect data, including identifying species (e.g. birds and other fauna), mapping habitats and associated flora on their farms.

[Fellfoot Forward](#): starting in 2020, this project ran through 2021 and 2022 with a range of activities such as recording days and recording training courses for local communities. A key involvement for CBDC was the 2022 Festival of Nature at Talkin Tarn as well as County Wildlife Site survey days with CBDC recorders and members of the local communities. These events have been discussed in more details above.

South Cumbria Butterfly and Moth Species Recovery Project started in 2022 and used the outputs from the LNRS Pilot to identify areas for key species recovery work, matching habitat to butterfly and moth species records. In collaboration with Natural England, Butterfly Conservation and Cumbria Local Nature Partnership, the work helped to provide a road map for habitat creation/restoration for some key species. An example of the output is shown in Figure 6.

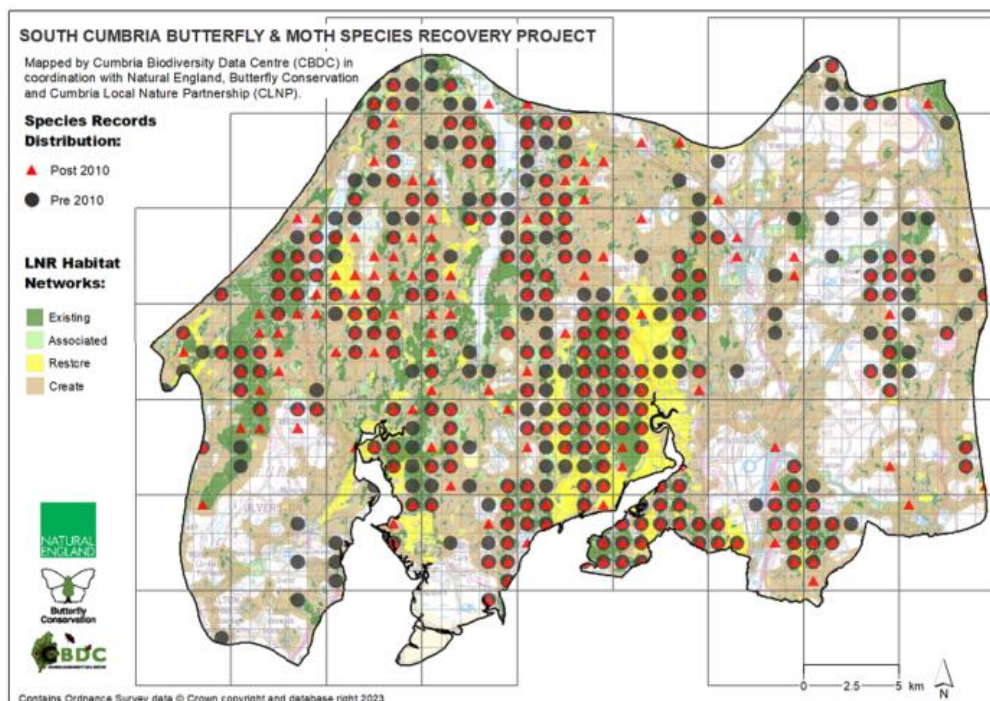


Figure 6: Example of CBDC mapping for the South Cumbria Butterfly & Moth Species Recovery Project, demonstrating how the output from one project can be utilised in other projects to better inform decision making across the county.

## VOLUNTEERS

The impacts of COVID-19 are still being felt in supporting office-based volunteers. With staff working from home, it was not possible to support office-based volunteers as in previous years. Two long-standing volunteers were offered temporary contracts in summer 2022 to help with COVID-19 recovery and to help fill the gap felt through the loss of the volunteer body.

Recording volunteers are still very active and participate in different CBDC and other events organised across Cumbria. Recorders are vital to delivering species records to CBDC and promoting the role of CBDC through local group activity.

## FINANCES

CBDC financial accounts are published as part of the Annual Report for Tullie House Museum which is available from the Charity Commission website. The two years covered in this report represent the second and third years that CBDC has returned a surplus in the last six years.

£	FYE 31/03/2022	FYE 31/03/2023
<b>INCOME</b>	106,394	107,349
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>	90,997	96,567
<b>SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)</b>	15,397	10,782
<b>RESERVES (CASH + CAPITAL)</b>	143,214	153,996

## STEERING GROUP

The work of CBDC is overseen by a steering group made up of local stakeholders. Primarily, these are representatives of the local planning authorities and other organisations with whom CBDC has developed a service level agreement or works closely on project work. Further representation is from the recording community (initially through Cumbria Naturalists Union and latterly through Carlisle Natural History Society) and hosts Tullie House Museum. Their advice and steer enable CBDC to inform many projects across the county.

### Steering Group:

David Clarke - Cumbria Naturalists Union/Cumbria Natural History Society (Chair)

Judy Clavey - Independent Ecologist

Chris Hoban - Development Plans Officers Group (Copeland BC)

Chris Hardman - Development Management Officers Group (Carlisle CC)

Hannah Girvan – Cumbria County Council (from 11 July 2022)

Graham Jackson-Pitt - Cumbria Wildlife Trust

Andrew Mackay - Tullie House Museum, Director (until November 2021)

Anna Smalley – Tullie House Museum (from November 2021)

Kath Milne – Natural England (until May 2022)

Lois Browne - Natural England (from May 2022)

Peter Strike - Tullie House Museum Trustee

## STAFFING

CBDC has three full time staff plus two part-time staff who were previously volunteers but offered fixed term staff roles in summer 2022 to reflect extra duties required. Deb Muscat was CBDC Manager until July 2022, with Dr Rebecca Slack assuming the role in February 2023. Dr El-Moustafa Eweda was promoted in 2022 from Data Officer to Data Manager reflecting an enhanced role in a number of county-wide projects. Stuart Colgate continued in the role of Recording Officer. Marjorie Hunt (Administrative and Data Assistant) and Annwen Philipson (Recording Assistant) joined the staff in 2022 having both been stalwart volunteers for CBDC in previous years.

## PARTNERS AND CLIENTS

We would like to thank our project partners listed below as well as all clients who have used our data search service and project collaborators such as Cumbria Wildlife Trust and the Farmer Network.

Note that there was a change to the local authorities in Cumbria in 2023, with Cumberland Council replacing Carlisle, Allerdale, Copeland and northern/western Cumbria County Council, and Westmorland and Furness Council subsuming Eden, South Lakes, Barrow and southern/eastern Cumbria County Council.

