

Biographies of individuals being proposed as Welsh Ornithological Society trustees or take up specific roles as identified in the constitution

Vice-Chair of Council – Mike Shewring

Mike has been a WOS trustee since 2020 and is one of the most experienced members of Council. Mike would bring stability and continuity to Council in the role of Vice-Chair. Mike currently manages the WOS Grants programme and sits on the conference working group.

Mike is a Senior Conservation Scientist within the RSPB's Scotland and Northern Ireland team. His research focuses on upland land management, peatland restoration, and the ecological impacts of wildfires, utilising spatial analysis to evaluate habitat restoration and biodiversity outcomes - particularly for invertebrates and birds. He completed his PhD on the European Nightjar at Cardiff University with Dr. Rob Thomas. Prior to his academic research, he spent several years working as a professional ecologist.

Youth Member of Council – Saffron Forrester

Saffron was introduced to the Welsh Ornithological Society in 2024 on a Bardsey Bird Observatory university-week. She went on that trip with amateur bird knowledge and no idea of what she wanted to do with her life. That trip was sponsored by WOS and now thanks to those seven days on the island, Saffron's life has changed. Saffron has helped to organise multiple university-weeks on Bardsey Island, introducing 20 more students to the island in the hopes of inspiring them as she was.

As a Youth Council Member for WOS, Saffron would like to continue introducing young people into the field of ornithology across Wales. Saffron is also a BTO Youth Representatives of Wales and as such sees firsthand the lack of resources and community for young naturalists. There are big geographic gaps in Wales and Saffron would like to help fill those gaps and bring more young people into the world of birdwatching. Saffron is a good communicator and has strong organisational skills. Since being co-opted onto Council she has already made a good contribution to our discussions. Saffron is currently studying a Master degree, by research at Bangor University, investigating the presence of microplastics in the pellets of Barn Owls, in the hopes of discovering sustainable ways of monitoring pollution with the help of birds, as well as drawing attention to the risks they face in their day-to-day lives.

Member of Council – Anya Wicikowski

Driven by a lifelong passion for bird conservation, Anya has dedicated her career to protecting and restoring the UK's most threatened avian species. Anya currently works for the RSPB as a Conservation Officer for North Wales Moors Priority Landscape, where she leads on high-profile species recovery projects such as Black Grouse and Curlew. Anya has good organisational and project management skills and has used these to build and maintain crucial partnerships among diverse stakeholders, working directly with landowners to deliver habitat restoration that balances land use while enhancing vital upland habitats. Anya has a good

understanding of ornithological policy and is also keen to help engage volunteers in contributing to citizen science surveys etc.

Anya was co-opted onto Council in November 2025 and since then has made a valuable contribution to the WOS Atlas working group as WOS establishes its role as an official partner in Bird Atlas 2027-31. Anya would bring to WOS Council a unique combination of practical conservation experience, technical expertise, project management, stakeholder engagement skills, and a passionate commitment to protecting Wales' avian species.

Member of Council – Joshua Brown

Joshua moved to West Wales a few years ago and immediately became involved in everything to do with birds, including joining WOS, ringing with the Teifi Ringing Group, and attending the WOS conference. Last year, Joshua birdwatched all around Wales and managed to reach the magic 200 species seen in one year – true dedication.

Joshua is currently completing a research MSc on bird sound recording for conservation. He has worked and volunteered with a variety of bird- and wildlife-related organisations including the RSPB and an ecological consultancy, BSG Ecology. He is also the eBird reviewer for Wales, which is similar to the role of county recorders in reviewing unusual records and ensuring observations are accurate. This brings Joshua in contact with many bird recorders throughout Wales and has helped to develop his communication skills.

Joshua has managed to acquire a lot of skills relevant to the workings of WOS and his youth, energy and enthusiasm would be particularly valuable. Amongst other roles, Joshua would like to help engage younger people in Bird Atlas 2027-31 participation.

Member of Council and Membership Secretary – Ian M Spence

Ian was co-opted onto Council in June 2026 to temporarily take over the role of Membership Secretary. This role is a critical one and without someone to take over the role from Alison Noble, the charity cannot function. Ian has agreed to take on this role until such time as a new website is up and running and a new Membership Secretary can be recruited long-term.

Ian was a former trustee holding the position of WOS Secretary from 2006 to 2020. Ian is an experienced user of the Microsoft software package Excel, which has been vital in the handover and management of the membership data and set-up of the new membership package: membermojo.

Ian firmly believes in doing birdwatching with a purpose. He has been an active bird ringer and nest recorder for over 40 years and has taken part in many long-term BTO surveys such as BBS and WeBS. Ian was the former County Bird Recorder and report editor in NE Wales and was very much involved with the Atlas project that led to publication of 'The Breeding Birds of North Wales' in 2013. He was later one of the editors of '*The Birds of Wales/Adar Cymru*' in 2021.