



Trash Free Trails

LIFETIME	IMPACT	REPORT
2 0 1 9	-	2 0 2 5



TREK



ORBEA





Weighing
10,049kg

78%
of volunteers felt
more connected to
their wild places after
trail cleaning

Worked with
2600
Young people

Removed
and surveyed
572,830
items of single-
use pollution

With the help of
7671
volunteers

And cleaned
15,408km
of trails

81%
of items surveyed were
classed as single-use

Who have donated
12,113
hours of their time

State of Our Trail
Report Submissions
2098

Reached over
1 million
people across the
world through digital
storytelling

THIS IS OUR FIRST
ATTEMPT TO STEP BACK
AND TELL A LONGER
STORY ABOUT OUR **IMPACT.**



Until now, we've reported our work year by year, month by month and event by event. That approach has value, but it also has limits. Real change - in ecosystems, communities, or culture - does not happen within 12-month cycles. Measuring impact annually has done a great job of telling us what happened, rather than what changed.

So with this Report, we asked a different question: when you zoom out across multiple years, what is genuinely different now, and are those the changes we set out to create or contribute to?

Since 2019, our community has removed and surveyed over 570,000 items of single-use pollution across more than 15,000 km of trails, powered by thousands of volunteers. Those outputs matter. But the more important shift is cumulative. People are organising cleans themselves, collecting data as a daily ritual, and bringing everyone they can with them. We're seeing our work embedded into education, workplaces and professional sporting culture - the world around our volunteers is changing, thanks to their efforts.



For the first time, this Impact Report focuses on our outcomes rather than timelines and outputs. It's structured around the changes we are working toward, based on a new Theory of Change we're developing. The indicators we include are not statements we've done it, but indicators that the conditions for change are growing.

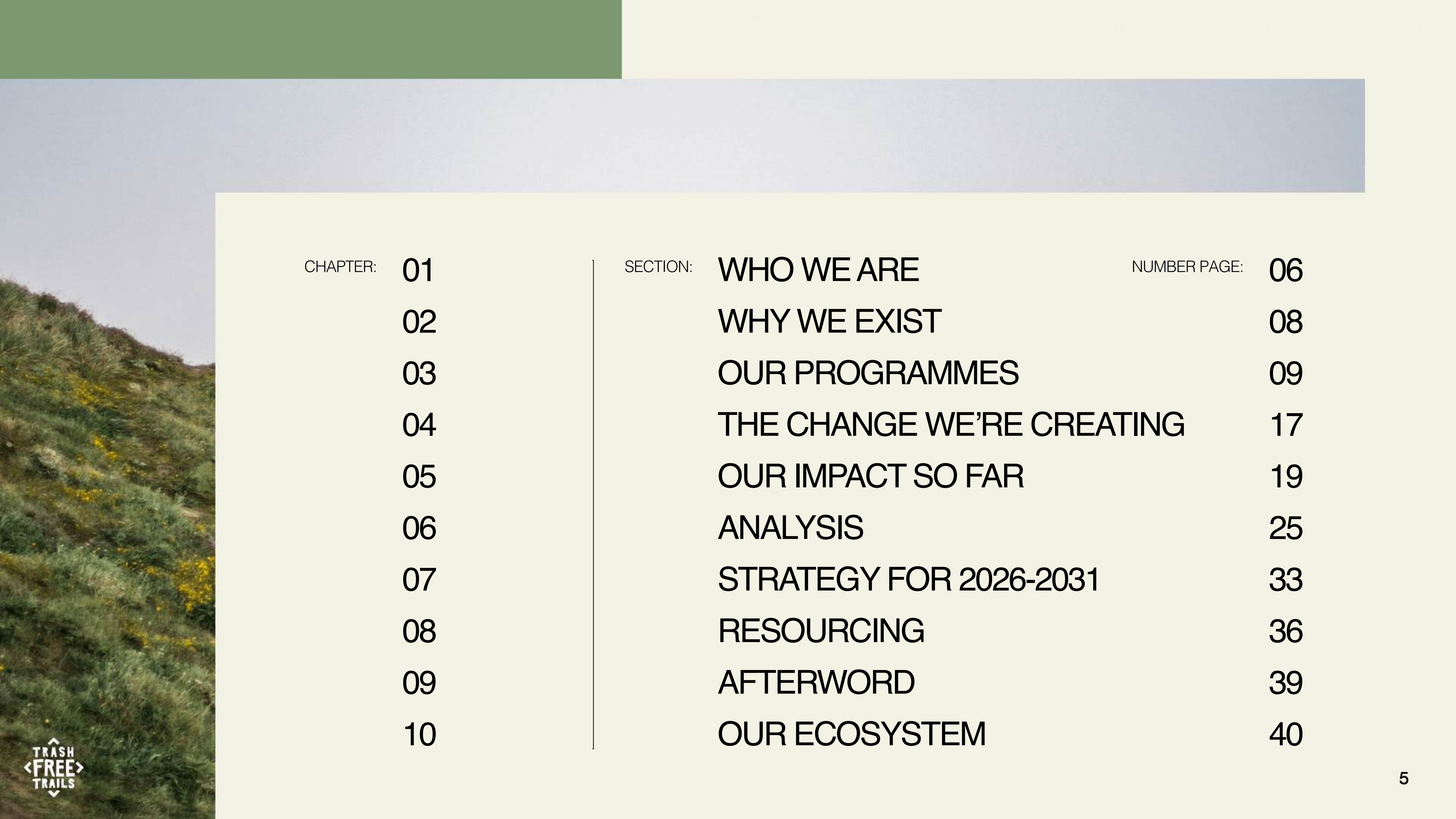
We are clear about what we cannot yet claim. Ecological restoration and wellbeing development take time; maybe longer than any of us will be around to experience - but that makes it all the more important that our movement is increasingly self propelling, community led, and embedded beyond the 9 people working at TFT HQ.

For me, what gives me the greatest pride is this shift from delivery to ownership. More and more often the story is not 'TFT hosted a trail clean' but 'our community looks after this place'. The cumulative effect that proof, replication and momentum has is the true impact this Report seeks to reflect.



CHANGE IS UNDERWAY,
AND MORE IS COMING. WE
COULDN'T BE PROUDER
OF WHAT WE'RE GROWING
TOGETHER.

Rich.



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WHO WE ARE

[01]

Simply, we are riders, runners and roamers. It's through our adventures on foot and wheel that our love for wild places has grown, and those wild places have since set seed, grown roots within us, intertwining themselves with our senses of self.

We are environmental stewards. What began as

a rallying cry to trail users to recognise that the problem of plastic pollution was just as present, and far greater, onland, has grown into a daily commitment to clean up the places we love.

We are nature connectors and spark makers. Our trail cleaning habits opened up something within us; a profound sense of connection with

the natural world and our communities. We saw in the act of removing trash the possibility of encouraging others to strengthen their own relationship with nature - and perhaps the beginning of the end of the single-use pollution crisis.

OUR MISSION:

To (re)connect people with nature through the simple yet meaningful act of removing single-use pollution from places we love.

OUR VISION FOR 2030:

Our trails and wild places are so cared for that there are days when we can run, ride or roam without encountering single-use pollution.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

Strategic Objectives

01

Empower and enable community led, environmental stewardship of our trails and wild places.

02

Remove huge amounts of single-use pollution (SUP) and inspire a reduction in 'littering' behaviour.

03

Understand the causes and impacts of SUP through citizen science, and contribute to global environmental, biodiversity, and human wellbeing goals.

04

Use our work as an educational tool to increase nature connection, wellbeing, and pro-environmental intentions, particularly among those who need it most.

05

Inspire connection with the natural world and improve wellbeing by embedding purpose and meaning into everyday adventure on trails.

06

Coalesce with intersecting movements and influence policy, practice and culture together.

WHY WE EXIST.

The hills and the woods shape our adventures. They offer freedom, perspective and a unique sense of belonging. These places give generously, but they are under increasing pressure. Across the UK, we estimate that more than 11.8 million pieces of single-use pollution are scattered through our wild spaces, dropped along our trails and tangled in our hedgerows.

As a country, the UK places among the lowest in Europe for nature connectedness. And it's this lack of connection that the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) identifies as one of the key drivers of environmental decline.

And yet millions of us do feel a deep connection to the trails we ride, run and roam and the wild places that sustain us. Trash Free Trails exists because of these people and what their relationship with nature can do.



[02]

As a small, community-built organisation formed on the trails, we don't have the power alone to redress structural inequalities or transform the decision making of multinational corporate strategies. But we do have the tools - and the intent - to reconnect people with nature, with each other, and with themselves. Most importantly, we have a growing movement of people taking action.

We facilitate simple, collective acts of care for the places that matter to us. By spending time together outside, tackling single-use pollution, we don't just create cleaner recreational trails and healthier habitats - we help grow the connections, confidence and momentum needed to drive change far beyond them.

THERE'S A LOT OF WORK TO BE DONE.

But by tending to the places we love, we open the door to wider environmental awareness, a culture of shared responsibility, and the possibility of far-reaching change.

OUR PROGRAMMES

[03]



Disconnection from nature is something of a 'wicked' problem - a tangle of interlocking challenges needing multiple, varied solutions which unknots the web from as many angles as possible.

We have developed our programmes with this need in mind, their breadth exemplifying both the complexity of the

issue we're trying to tackle, but also the diverse skills and experience within our community to contribute to our mission. Covering education, volunteer activation, political advocacy, research and events, our programmes are not merely deliverables - but act as a roadmap towards lasting systems change, always with our connection to place at their heart.

Our programmes act as individual entities through which we organise time, team workload and resources - we break down the wicked problem, and work at small, tangible solutions.

Together they form a composite ecosystem, far reaching in its pursuit of change. This is how we will achieve our mission.



TRAIL CLEANS

Trail Cleans sit at the heart of our mission. An open invitation for riders, runners and roamers to connect, pay attention, and take simple, meaningful action to protect the places they love.

With over 304,000km of recreational trails in the UK alone, our small but mighty team can't clean every kilometre themselves. Moreover, each region is different - facing their own set of unique challenges towards clean trails and more connected communities.

Built on our 'DIO' (Do It Ourselves) philosophy, we provide the inspiration, information and tools for trail lovers everywhere, enabling them to take action at any time, on any trail, but in their own way.

Our digital resources are free-to-use and available 24/7/365 - enabling volunteers to contribute in tangible ways that work for them.

Our Trail Cleans programme is about connection - to nature, to the places we love, but also to other people around the world who share our passion for protecting wild spaces. Whether it's through being down in the hedgerows with a stranger, or sharing stories through social media, everyone and every way of trail cleaning is welcomed.



THE A-TEAM

Our dedicated team of volunteer ambassadors, our A-TEAM live and breathe DIO. They have taken our resources and manifested Trash Free Trails in the places they care about, donating their time, talent and passion to our mission by hosting trail cleans, participating in our research, and supporting our organisational direction.

As our boots on the ground, the A-TEAM keeps us alive to trail communities across the world, ensuring our work remains valuable and inspiring, all the while going that extra mile to protect wild places. In return, they receive direct support from HQ and Programme Partners, and hold a vital place at the centre of our ecosystem. They are, quite literally, the heart and soul of everything we do.

SINCE DAY ONE, THE A-TEAM HAS

Removed
24,211 kg
items weighing
369 kg

Delivered dozens of
trail cleans in their
communities

Removed
1252 km
alongside 666
volunteers

Supported
dozens of events
in the UK and
beyond

TFT COMMUNITY HUBS

Our Community Hubs are TFT ‘outposts’ - welcoming physical spaces, tapped into their local area, headed up by passionate community leaders who want to connect, share ideas, and help keep their local trails clean.

Each year these Hubs organise trail cleans and contribute invaluable data to our research, inviting and engaging the more Hardly Reached members of their community with nature connection. Alongside our Programme Partners we provide them with kit, support and training to spread the TFT mission in their community, in ways that work for them.

SINCE THE PROGRAMME’S INCEPTION IN 2022 OUR COMMUNITY HUBS HAVE

Removed
84,386
items weighing
1480 kg

Cleaned
2374 km
with
1287 people

Submitted 276
Surveys to the
State of Our Trails
Report

TRASH FREE RACES

Whether on our feet or a few wheels, racing is our favourite way to play. But with a reputation for single-use pollution and environmental damage, outdoor race events suffer from the same disconnection we do as individuals.

In 2019 we asked ourselves: how could racing be a force for good on our trails? How could these events, which mean so much to so many of us, have a positive impact on the places that host them, and inspire attendees to do the same at home?

Trash Free Races answers these questions, emboldening organisers and attendees alike to take action and transform these events into not only spectacles, but examples of the power of collective environmental action.

SINCE 2019, OUR TRASH FREE RACES PROGRAMME HAS:

Attended
33 events

Engaged
tens of
thousands of
people

5 Hardly
Reached
activations

Supported
60+
events to
adopt "TFT
Approved"

Removed
40,541
items / weighing
711 kg



RESEARCH

Our long-running Citizen Science project - the State of Our Trails (SoOT) Report - tracks the scale and impact of single-use pollution, presenting data gathered by volunteers across the world. Using this data, backed by a Masters Research project in collaboration with Bangor University, we advocate for equity of awareness and action to protect recreational trails from single-use pollution.

Our Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) with Edinburgh Napier University builds on this

foundation. We're exploring - and hopefully proving - how volunteer engagement with our citizen science, combined with outdoor physical activity can support wellbeing through strengthened nature connection. One day, this will be available as social prescription.

These research strands help shape our work, guide partners and policy makers and give our community a powerful voice on a national and international level.

PURPOSEFUL ADVENTURES

Purposeful Adventures is our way of helping people (re)connect with nature through small, meaningful acts of care. It invites riders, runners and roamers to head outside with intention; whether that's removing a few pieces of trash, noticing changes in their favourite places, or simply slowing down to say hello to the people we meet along the way.

Through shared stories, simple activities and community support, the programme turns everyday

outings into opportunities to look after ourselves and the places we love. Over the next 5 years we're reimagining Purposeful Adventure into a vehicle through which to communicate our new research into wellbeing, trail cleaning and nature connection.



TFT EDUCATION



Fostering connected communities doesn't need to come later in life; we believe that if we instil principles of connection and belonging early, it will last. TFT Education encompasses a network of youth engagement projects designed to build self-esteem, confidence and overall wellbeing through engagement with trail cleaning and outdoor physical activity.

Whether it's school assemblies, digital resources for educators, or long-term programmes with groups of students, TFT Education enables young people to develop a deeper sense of connection with the natural world, instilling a sense of social and environmental responsibility to last a lifetime.

Involved
2600
Young people

Delivered dozens of
trail cleans in their
communities

Downloaded
278
Resources

Removed
920
Items



EMERGENCE PROGRAMME

Environmental NGOs and charities face the significant challenge of trying to change the system from the inside out - sometimes falling prey to traditional working practices of competition, hierarchies and relentless growth, overlooking the very thing we want to protect.

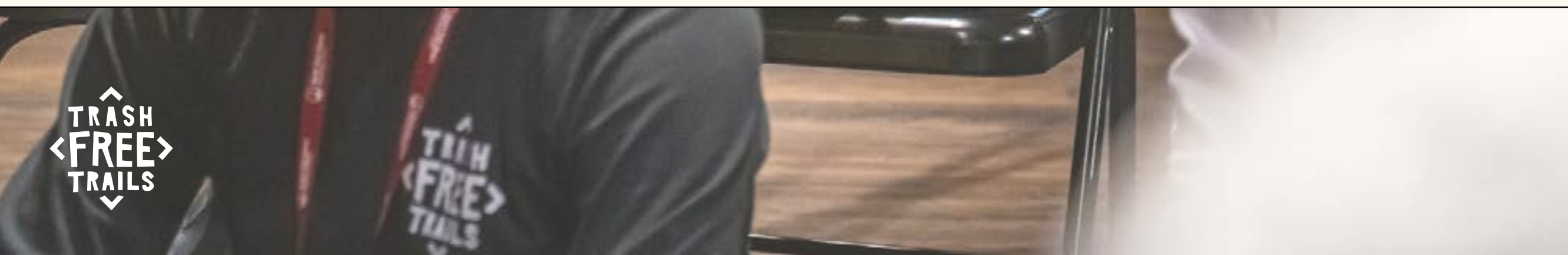
Through our Emergence programme we are attempting to make systemic change in service to our wild

places, through collaboration with peer organisations, policy makers and researchers. Putting nature and its teachings at the heart of how we work, Emergence sees us rally together for political, social and behavioural change, finding new ways to work together that centre compassion, care and reciprocity.

COMMUNICATIONS

The story of our work and community forms a bedrock programme - through digital storytelling, social media, film, press, media and events, we capture the positive actions our volunteers are undertaking every day and transmit them out to the world, celebrating the power of daily environmental stewardship.

From bespoke magazines to talking poo bags on our Youtube, we've reached millions of people with the stories of Trash Free Trails, emphasising the power of authentic positivity in the pursuit of change.



THE CHANGE WE WANT TO CREATE



[04]

To influence change within complex systems we need to understand when and how we contribute to change, rather than trying to isolate complex outcomes with many influences.

To do this, we have identified six Outcome Areas, to demonstrate and celebrate the pathway to our long-term ambitions and

impact; to create a sustained reduction in single-use pollution and an increase in levels of nature connectedness.

This framework underpins every stage of our work - from project design, to delivery and monitoring, to reviewing and analysing data over time. It presents our emerging understanding of how we are contributing

to change, captured through our long-term data collection and Case Studies from across our programmes.

This framework isn't fixed or finished - but instead acts as a living approach through which we can continue to act, adapt and learn, all in service of the long-term impact we hope to have.

ENABLERS

ACTIVITIES

OBJECTIVES

OUTCOMES

IMPACT

FUNDING

TIME

STAFF

KNOWLEDGE

TRAIL
CLEANS

TRASH
FREE RACES

COMMUNITY
BUILDING

SoOT
RESEARCH

EMERGENCE

PURPOSEFUL
ADVENTURE

EDUCATION

KTP

Remove huge amounts of single-use pollution (SUP) and inspire a reduction in 'littering' behaviour.

Empower and enable community led, environmental stewardship of our trails and wild places.

Understand the causes and impacts of SUP through citizen science, and contribute to global environmental, biodiversity, and human wellbeing goals.

Coalesce with intersecting movements and influence policy, practice and culture together.

Inspire connection with the natural world and improve wellbeing by embedding purpose and meaning into everyday adventure on trails.

Use our work as an educational tool to increase nature connection, wellbeing, and pro-environmental intentions, particularly among those who need it most.

HEALTHY TRAILS

We have protected and restored trail ecosystems, through the removal of single-use pollution, and the reduction of 'littering' behaviour.

CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

We have fostered an independently active community, who care passionately about their trails and feel equipped to take action to enhance them.

CITIZEN SCIENCE POWER

We have an academically robust citizen science SUP monitoring programme that harmonises with aquatic programmes and contributes to an increased global understanding of the causes, impacts and potential solutions to single-use pollution.

EQUITABLE COLLABORATION

We have contributed significantly to changes in policy, practice and culture, that will reduce single-use pollution, increase nature connection and promote the value of our trails and wild places.

HAPPY TRAIL USERS

We have improved the overall wellbeing of participants through improvements in nature connection, physical fitness and social responsibility.

EVERYONE IS WELCOM(ED)

We have created a community that welcomes everyone, by delivering accessible activations with marginalised communities in the uk, contributing to an increase in the diversity of trail users

An ecologically, economically and socially significant reduction in single-use pollution on recreational trails and a causatory increase in nature connection well-being and pro environmental intentions amongst those who visit them.



OUR IMPACT SO FAR

The impact of our work is not solely for the near-future. It is already unfolding, felt by our community and the wider ecosystem we are a part of, who champion connected communities and protected wild spaces. The following section outlines several Case Studies, demonstrating a few of our Outcome areas in action, and introducing you to some of the amazing people who make up our community.



[05]

JO SHWE



ALTERNATIVE PROVISION SPECIALIST,
A-TEAMER AND NON-EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

When educator Joe Shwe reached out asking to use the Trash Free Trails logo in school materials, no one could have predicted the impact that simple request would spark.

Working with young people who often feel overlooked – teenagers facing trauma, disrupted education and low confidence – Jo saw in TFT a chance to offer belonging and purpose. From that vision the TrashMob Academy was born – now one of our most impactful youth-engagement programmes. The Academy helps students get outdoors to ride bikes, connect with nature and take pride in their local spaces.

“Some of these young people arrive thinking the world doesn’t care about them. The TrashMob Academy shows them they matter,” says Jo.

Since launching, the Academy has supported over 2,600 young people, including 1,000 through direct classroom delivery, across 100+ sessions. These young people have spent hundreds of hours on trails, removing more than 5,000 pieces of single-use pollution and contributing to our SoOT Research programme. As of 2026, Jo has joined us as a Non-Executive Director, further supporting the direction of our work.

“Students who once avoided school now volunteer at trail centres, remain in education, rediscovering confidence through being outdoors. They were used to seeing trash. It was their norm. Now they’re proud of their spaces,” she says.

The TrashMob Academy shows that when young people feel seen and valued, they don’t just care for their trails, they care for themselves and each other.

RUTH FINNEY



COMMUNITY HUB LEAD

What started as one woman’s act of care for her local hill has grown into an annual event bringing together an entire community. Ruth Finney – mountain bike guide, Bikeability instructor and Trash Free Trails Community Hub Lead and A-TEAMer – lives just a few minutes from The Wrekin trailhead. For her, caring for this place is personal.

Across three years, for walkers, mountain bikers, families, teenagers, retirees, dog-walkers and Street Champions, her Spring Trail Clean has become a fixture in the calendar - and the impact is striking.

In 2025 they removed and reported

2,243 items of single-use pollution - everything from drinks containers and disposable vapes and more. Each year, Ruth shares this data with the local council and land managers responsible for the trails.

“Doing a positive thing is mentally rewarding; it feels good inside,” says Ruth. “And the stats gave me a firestarter with the landowners and the council.”

People feel proud afterwards; they talk about the buzz, the sense of doing something meaningful, the joy of being part of a shared effort. For Ruth, it’s the sight of people connecting through their care for The Wrekin together that makes

the effort worthwhile. By caring for these trails, she has helped bring connection to a whole community.

SIAN ELMORE



SUSTAINABILITY, BIKMO

As Sustainability Lead at Bikmo – a cycling insurance company built on environmental principles – Sian Elmore helps steer the business towards meaningful action. When she talks about Bikmo’s partnership with Trash Free Trails, she always returns to one idea: if you ride somewhere, you have a responsibility to care for it.

What started with a volunteer trail clean for the Bikmo team has grown into a long-term 1% For The Planet Partnership and a collaboration built on community, stewardship and a passion for giving back. Coming together in Delamere Forest for a partner day, the Bikmo team got to learn more about the far-reaching

impacts of TFT’s work.

“It wasn’t all fun and light; it was confronting, but in a good way. People started to build a picture of their trail and notice changes,” says Sian.

One team member who joined the day - ‘not really recycling’ Steve - now leads trail cleans and runs Bikmo’s salvage scheme, keeping bike parts out of landfill. Others spoke about how seeing so much rubbish in a place they loved motivated them to act.

Bikmo’s continued support of our efforts demonstrates how genuine behavioural change and corporate

excellence can sit hand-in-hand, showcasing what’s possible what a business commits not just money, but time and care too.

TOM HUTTON



TFT AUSTRALIA LEAD

When he first heard Trash Free Trails mentioned on a podcast, Tom Hutton was in Sydney. Something clicked and soon an email landed in our inbox.

Within months, he and co-conspirator Dan Smith were laying the foundations for Trash Free Trails Australia. It isn't a replication of TFT UK; they translated it, shifting the tone to suit the country, the people, the culture, while retaining a shared global philosophy.

"You have to speak the local language. It needs to feel like us."

What began as a few solo cleans locally has grown into a small but

active network of Hubs picking up an average of 5-10 kilos of single-use pollution with thousands more engaging through events and social media.

Weekly Trash Free Fridays, corporate Trash Walk & Talks, and family-friendly clean-ups are helping to normalise the idea that if you ride somewhere, you look after it.

"It's about what happens when people show up," he says. "I love the boots-on-the-ground community. Real people doing real stuff. That's what matters."

What's happening in Australia shows that TFT's philosophy

translates wherever people ride, run or roam. It's not about exporting a programme – it's about backing local leaders who understand their communities and want to realise TFT's mission in their own way, wherever their trails are.

MARK WILSON



A-TEAMER

Mark Wilson didn't set out to become an A-Teamer. He simply started walking the same 2km loop each day with his dogs during lockdown. What he discovered was the cans, bottles, wrappers – sometimes whole bags of it – that gathered along the paths.

What began as a coping strategy for his mental health slowly became a ritual. Each day he'd pick up what he found, talk to people he passed, and share his observations online.

"It gave me purpose, so I just carried on what I was doing, but with more intensity, and with a community behind me," says Mark.

Over three years, he's collected more than 5,000 pieces of single-use pollution from the same woodland loop. He's built relationships with local walkers, teenagers using the river and retirees who now help maintain the area - all through simple, non-judgemental conversation. Nature connection and daily action are now foundational to his wellbeing. *"It clears my head. Better than any medication ever did,"* he says.

Mark is now a cornerstone of our A-TEAM. He volunteers at national TFT activations and collaborates locally with Hubs like Dee Valley Clean Up. His story shows how small, local acts of care can quietly

transform whole communities: one dog walk, one conversation, one trail at a time.

ANALYSIS

ANALYSIS:

Across Jo, Ruth, Sian, Tom and Mark's stories, a clear pattern emerges; people who connect deeply with their trails develop agency, knowledge and motivation to take action which has lasting impact.

Their experiences collectively provide strong qualitative evidence for all six of our Intended Outcomes, as well as highlighting opportunities for us to grow and develop our programmes to be more far reaching.

[06]

{ ANALYSIS }

Connected Communities

Sian facilitates organisational agency, showing that environmental action can go hand in hand with workplace culture.

Tom is building TFT Hubs across Australia, translating the TFT ethos into a new cultural context.

Jo empowers young people who felt “the world doesn’t care about them” to see themselves as capable changemakers.

Mark shares his daily stewardship with other people he encounters in his local area through inspiring conversations.

Across all Case Studies, individuals conveyed increased agency to take action through engaging with our work, and a clear understanding of how to do so using our DIO Toolkit. What often began as an individual endeavour was positively infectious, bringing together whole communities all in the spirit of taking care of our trails.

Ruth has established a local community fixture that now attracts 30 - 40 volunteers each year.

{ ANALYSIS }

Healthy Trails

Jo's students have removed 5,000+ items and now see their trails differently.

Mark removes over 5,000 items from a 2km loop and documents ecological impacts such as chew marks and animal deaths.

Removal of single-use pollution underpins all the Case Studies; what's more profound, however, is how these individuals' simple act is not only meaningful, but influential - changing norms around community understanding of littering behaviour, and showcasing a data-driven path to cleaner trails.

Tom reports Community Hubs shifting 5 - 10kg of single-use pollution weekly.

Ruth's multi-year dataset 1,000, 2,078, 2,243 items shows year-on-year waste tracking and the increased impact of growing volunteers attending her cleans

{ ANALYSIS }

Happy Trail Users

Mark uses SUP removal and reporting as a tool to maintain and develop his wellbeing (“better than any medication”).

Sian’s team report an emotional impact and strengthened connection to nature after taking part.

Improvements to individuals’ wellbeing can be found in abundance in these Case Studies. Across all, evidence of increase connected to nature, to others, and to a sense of responsibility are not just impacts in of themselves - but key steps towards the long-term wellbeing benefits of environmental stewardship.

Jo’s students build confidence, self esteem and overall wellbeing through their participation.

Ruth and her volunteer community repeatedly reference joy, pride and shared accomplishment.

{ ANALYSIS }

Citizen Science Power

Sian's team report an emotional impact and strengthened connection to nature after taking part.

The legacy of these individuals is not only in their communities, but in the power of their data to fuel insights to catalyse systemic change. Several of the Case Studies showcase the power of robust Citizen Science to build understanding, as well as action.

Mark contributes 100+ observations a year and is involved with pilots.

Jo's programme feeds 5,000+ items into the TFT citizen-science dataset.

{ ANALYSIS }

Equitable Collaboration

Sian champions TFT in her workplace, with Bikmo a multi-year partner through 1% For The Planet.

Tom builds partnerships with Bikes Online, Sea Otter Australia and running and mountain bike groups.

Not only do these individuals seek to create change themselves, they also recognise the power of collaboration with other stakeholders to expand their efforts, bring more people together, and encourage lasting changes in practices and behaviours that centre the value of our wild places

Jo connects schools, brands and community partners.

Ruth collaborates with councils, estates and local media.

{ ANALYSIS }

Everyone is Welcomed

Jo's work centres marginalised young people and builds belonging.

Ruth's events welcome walkers, cyclists, teenagers, retirees, families and first-timers.

Across many of the Case Studies, belonging is a concept thrown wide open, these individuals reflecting our inclusive and welcoming values, offering opportunity for people from all walks of life to participate.

Sian's usage of the TFT DIO model has enabled participation across skill levels.

Tom welcomes adaptive riders, families and a diverse range of trail users.

ANALYSIS

We're proud and moved to see how the actions of these individuals are, in their spheres of influence, creating lasting impacts. It's clear that the benefits of positive environmental behaviours like trail cleaning need the right scaffolding - a combination of inspiration, collaboration and agency - to flourish.

Equally, these Case Studies provide us with invaluable insight into how we can improve our efforts, emphasising a continued culture of community support and celebration.

We're excited to see the efforts of these individuals continue to grow and evolve, and to continue to highlight their impact through reduction in single-use pollution, increases in nature connection, and contributions to embedding new behaviours and practices that put our trails at their heart.

A STRATEGY FOR 2026-2031



Over the next 5 years, we're channelling all the learning, successes, failings and lessons of the last 6 into a clear and ambitious strategy to take us to 2031. We know more clearly than ever before that to create the vision of our trails we hope for, we must work with conviction, compassion and community, first and foremost.

Guiding project design, resourcing and long-term decision-making will be our 6 Outcome Areas shared in this Report, alongside our Theory of Change, to be published in Spring 2026.

We'll continue to expand our Citizen Science work, bolstered by the findings of our KTP, enabling us to offer research insights that help shape policy, practice and culture. Through this, our advocacy on behalf of trails and their communities will grow stronger, forming the front of a new wave of energy for protecting terrestrial ecosystems.

We'll centre our invitations to Hardly Reached communities across our project and programmes, embedding trust, meaningful representation and co-creation in all our work.

[07]

IN 2026, WE'LL BE FOCUSING ON:

- Utilising the KTP to emphasise the connection and wellbeing benefits our volunteers consistently report.
- Applying ecological findings from the Single-Use Pollution MRes to refine how we talk about Healthy Trails, beginning to include biodiversity data, and what we ask of partners.
- Collating findings from project delivery to replicate what is working and redesign weaker areas with input from our community.

IN THE NEXT 5 YEARS WE HOPE TO UNDERSTAND:

- The wellbeing and nature connection benefits of engaging with our work over the long-term for our volunteers, using the KTP as a new vehicle for research and discovery
- More about the impact of our work on our community through in-depth case studies.
- How trail ecosystems respond physically to sustained reductions in SUP.
- Who is participating in our work (and who isn't), so we can strengthen inclusion and representation across
- all programmes.

WE RECOGNISE TFT IS **EMBEDDED** IN AN EVER- CHANGING WORLD.

To ensure our 2026-2031 Strategy is receptive and open, we recognise there are opportunities to harness across the ecosystems we work within:

- Sustainability has shifted from an initiative to a strategy and mindset across brands and businesses. This opens doors for us to showcase to prospective partners how supporting our mission can integrate deeply into their own vision.

- Collaboration is the strongest accelerator in the challenging landscape we find ourselves within. When we work together - with business, governing bodies, land managers, policy makers and communities - progress comes faster. Teaming up to tackle shared challenges is more important than ever.
- Athletes remain an untapped influential driver of change on behalf of recreational trails - if we equip them with the know-how and confidence to advocate, athletes can influence consumer choices, push environmental action forward, and make sustainability a visible part of outdoor culture.

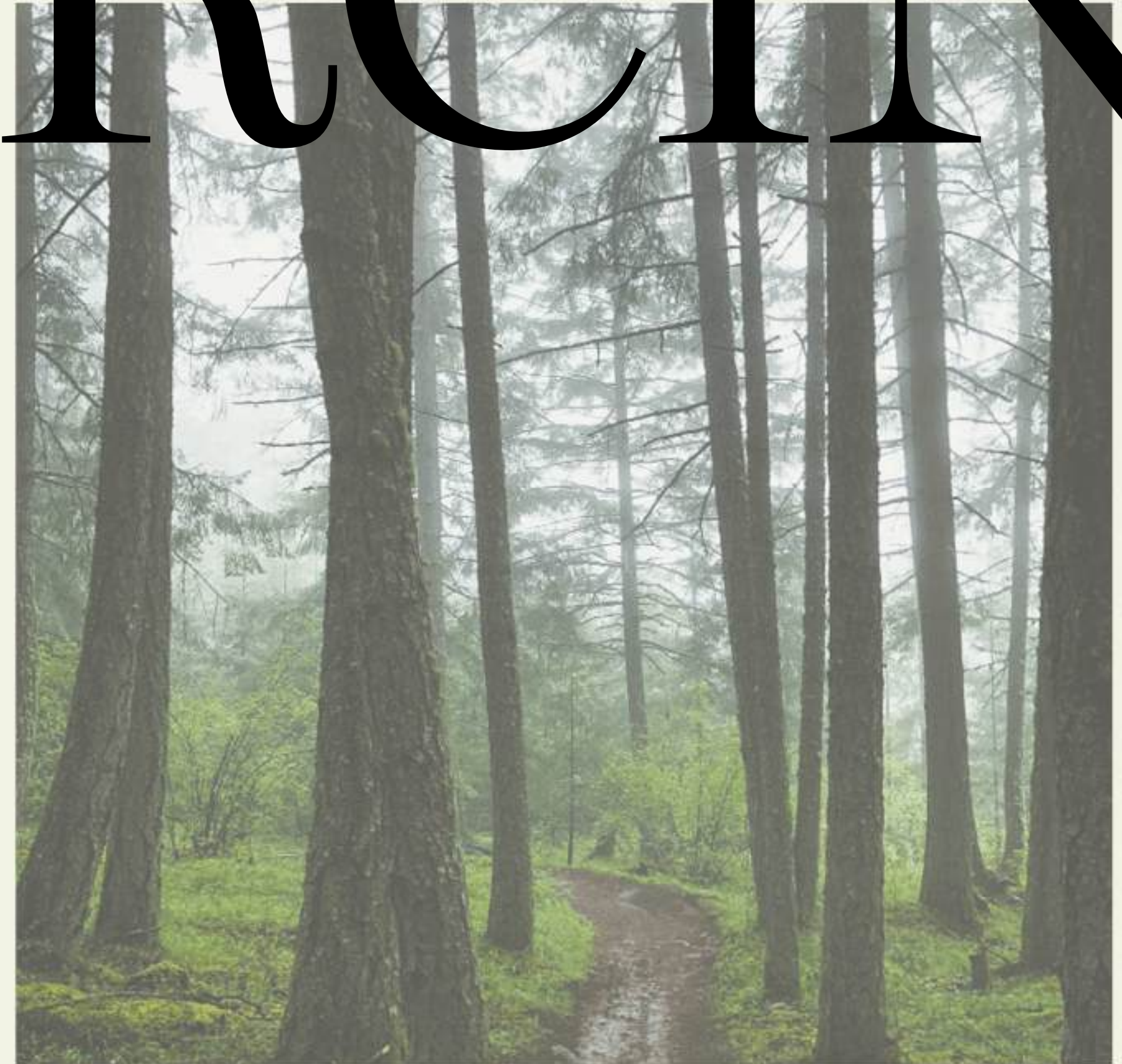
As we close the chapter on our first 6 years, our hearts and minds are open to what's coming next, and the chance to work harder for these places which mean so much to us.

RESOURCING

[08]

The impact described in this Report, does not happen by accident. It grows through thousands of voluntary hours, shared values, and people choosing to take responsibility for the places they care about.

Resourcing this work over the next five years is not about doing more for the sake of it. It is about tending the root system of this movement, so that communities grow more resilient, open to learning, and able to retain ownership of the work, the learning and the direction of travel long after individual projects end.





RESOURCING FOR AGENCY, NOT OWNERSHIP

As Trash Free Trails has grown, we have become increasingly intentional about ensuring that funding supports community agency, rather than directing or controlling the work.

Our aim is not to position TFT as the permanent driver of activity, but to ensure that riders, runners and roamers feel equipped and confident to protect and enhance their trails and wild places through:

- Removing and reporting single-use pollution as a shared, everyday practice
- Building understanding through evidence gathered on their own terms
- Strengthening nature connection through repeated, meaningful action

This requires resourcing that supports community-led action and avoids creating a reliance on TFT-led delivery.

WHAT WE ARE CHOOSING TO RESOURCE

Over the next five years, our funding will focus on the elements that strengthen our root system of community-led action:



Community Stewardship -

Sustaining the A-TEAM and Community Hub models so that local leaders can shape activity, set priorities and respond to the realities of the places they love and live.

Evidence as a Shared Tool -

Maintaining our Citizen Science infrastructure so that communities can generate credible data, build understanding, and speak with authority to land managers, partners and decision-makers.

Collaboration Without Capture -

Working alongside partners in ways that add capacity without redirecting intent, ensuring collaboration strengthens local ownership of the work.

Storytelling That Reinforces Agency -

Amplifying everyday acts of care in ways that centre the people doing the work, reinforcing the idea that protecting trails is something we do with places, not to them.

Building Financial Resilience That Protects Direction

To support this work responsibly, we are evolving how we fund it. Over time, we are:

- Reducing reliance on any single income source
- Prioritising longer-term funding that supports learning and continuity
- Developing earned income that aligns with our values and expertise
- Inviting wider participation in sustaining the movement

We also recognise that healthy, lasting funding relationships are a two-way street. We value partners who support this work for the right reasons, and we are equally committed to ensuring that their support creates genuine value - through credible evidence, cultural influence, shared learning and visible, place-based impact.

When expectations are aligned on both sides, relationships endure. And when they endure, communities are better supported to retain ownership of both the work and its direction.

To fund this work in practice, we draw on a balanced mix of support, including trusts and foundations, values-aligned corporate partnerships, earned income and community giving. We prioritise longer-term funding wherever possible, recognising that sustained impact on trails, behaviour and connection depends on continuity, learning and trust over time.

Trash Free Trails was never about hating single-use pollution, or ‘shaming litterers’. It came from a place of love - for trails, for wild spaces, and for what caring for them gave me personally. The simple act of removing single-use pollution offered purpose, connection and calm, and over time I saw the same thing happening for others. People didn’t just leave cleaner trails - they left feeling different. More connected. More responsible. More hopeful. I wanted to pass that experience on.

This ambition has held, but the pressure on organisations like ours to demonstrate success has never been greater. And when success is measured almost entirely through outputs, it becomes difficult to understand whether the change we’re seeking to create is actually happening at all. Without looking at the right things, you can’t learn, adapt, or improve how change is created. At its worst, the work risks becoming activity for activity’s sake - a hamster wheel where effort is constant, but impact remains unclear.

As Trash Free Trails has grown, so has our understanding. Working

alongside colleagues, partners and our community, we’ve learned to distinguish between activity and impact by asking a simple question: so what?

One thousand people attending or one thousand items removed are activities. The real question is what changes because of them - for places, people and communities - and what endures once we step away.

This Report reflects that evolution. It captures not just what has happened, but what has shifted - and it looks ahead to our 2030 vision: a future where trails are so cared for that there are days when we can ride, run or roam without encountering single-use pollution.

Over the next five years, our task is not just to create more impact, but to help more people create it for themselves. If we do this well, Trash Free Trails should be able to do itself out of a job - not remaining on a hamster wheel of trail cleaning, but helping to create change that endures, even as our role diminishes.

One of our Directors, Jo Shwe, once said:



“WE HAVEN’T CHANGED THE WORLD, BUT WE’VE CHANGED THEIR WORLD.”

She was talking about a small group of Hardly Reached young people whose lives and outlook had shifted in positive and lasting ways after taking part in our education programme. If this work changes one person’s world in a way that endures, I would choose that every time over impressing a thousand people without leaving anything meaningful behind.

Dom Ferris
Founder & CEO, Trash Free Trails.

Our Ecosystem.

Written by **Chris Hunt, Rich Breeden, Rach Coleman** and **Rosie Maguire**

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OUR FUNDERS.

Moondance Foundation
National Lottery
People's Postcode Lottery
Simon Gibson Foundation
Welsh Water
Millenium Stadium Trust
WCVA

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