



Thames Valley
Environmental
Records Centre

Thames Valley Environmental
Records Centre

Annual Report

2023/24



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Chair's Foreword



Since the introduction of Environment Act in 2021 the Government has gradually drip fed us with a plethora of new regulations and guidance about how elements of the act should be interpreted and implemented.

The provisions brought in by the Act represent the single biggest change in nature policy since the introduction of the Wildlife and Countryside Act in 1981 and, it is my profound hope that they will finally give us some of the tools we need to reverse the ongoing trends of habitat and species losses.

I am proud to say that TVERC is right at the heart of helping to deliver these changes in Berkshire and Oxfordshire, TVERC hold the data which underpins the decision-making process for new initiatives such as the Local Nature Recovery Strategies, Biodiversity Net Gain and Environmental Land Management schemes. Perhaps even more significantly, it is testament to the skills and professionalism of the TVERC team that they have become the trusted partner in both counties leading on the development of the Local Habitat Maps for the LNRS.

These maps once published, will be fundamental to how we target nature restoration in the counties over the coming years and I hope that TVERC will continue to play a leading role in monitoring and recording the restoration of habitats and the increasing numbers of important species thriving in this new network.

Dominic Lamb

*Climate and Biodiversity Team Leader
South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils*

Executive Summary



2023–24 was a busy year for TVERC. It is heartening that we have seen more people and organisations making good use of the wildlife data we curate. Over this last year we have supported increases in the amount of Data Searches, Licences, Exchanges and Research for our two counties.

I have enjoyed seeing the variety of project work that the TVERC team has supported. From identifying Habitat and Species trends in South & Vale, helping Parish Councils identify Green Corridors and areas important for biodiversity, to surveying sites and interpreting the findings to help landowners, local groups and councils make more of the opportunities to increase their value for biodiversity. Supporting the development of the Local Nature Recovery Strategies within Berkshire and Oxfordshire has of course been challenging at times but really rewarding too. These are a great example of how all of our different sets of data can be brought together to understand the both the current status of biodiversity and how and where its recovery can be prioritised.

It is also pleasing to see that there continues to be lots of recording activities being undertaken within our two counties. With people getting involved for the first time and new groups being formed. We hope that in the future we can do more to encourage and support them. In the last year we have improved the quality of our habitats and sites data alongside receiving and processing almost half a million species records.

Thank you to everyone at TVERC, our staff, our volunteers, and all the individuals, groups and organisations in Oxfordshire and Berkshire who have continued to help us to achieve so much.

Steve Wilkes
TVERC Director

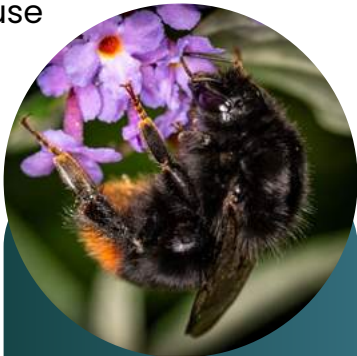
Who we are



TVERC are the only organisation in Berkshire and Oxfordshire providing a comprehensive ecological information hub through which critical knowledge can be shared to support scientific research and responsible decision-making.

We are at the center of a network of recorders and data-users in Berkshire and Oxfordshire and are the regional delivery node of the National Biodiversity Network.

We are a not-for-profit organisation run by a partnership. All those contributing to TVERC help manage our environmental resources sustainably for current and future use



Data

We collect wildlife information from a wide variety of sources in a coordinated way; enabling information-sharing between recorders and decision-makers.



Information

We are a specialist team with the skills, knowledge and dedication to make complex data understandable and available to all who need it.



Knowledge

This constantly improving, high quality resource is accessible by everyone, so they have the knowledge they need to carry out scientific research and make responsible decisions.



VISION

We live in a better environment because decisions are made using our data and insight.



MISSION

We are impartial environmental data scientists who collect, manage, analyse and share data in Oxfordshire and Berkshire so people can make sound decisions that protect and enhance our environment.

Looking back at our year

471,890 records imported

159k records from the Rothamsted Insect Surveys

Over 4,749,000 species records in the TVERC database

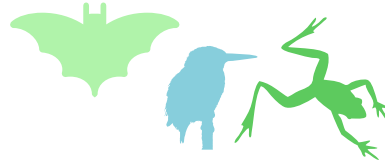


644 Datasets logged

542 datasets imported in 2023/24 financial year



Protected & Notable 105,512



Total number of records of Protected & Notable species added to our database

5999 Species covered

In 52 Taxon groups



1,352 Wildlife Sites



Total number of Local Wildlife Sites, District Wildlife Sites and City Wildlife Sites

39

Local Wildlife Sites surveyed in Oxfordshire

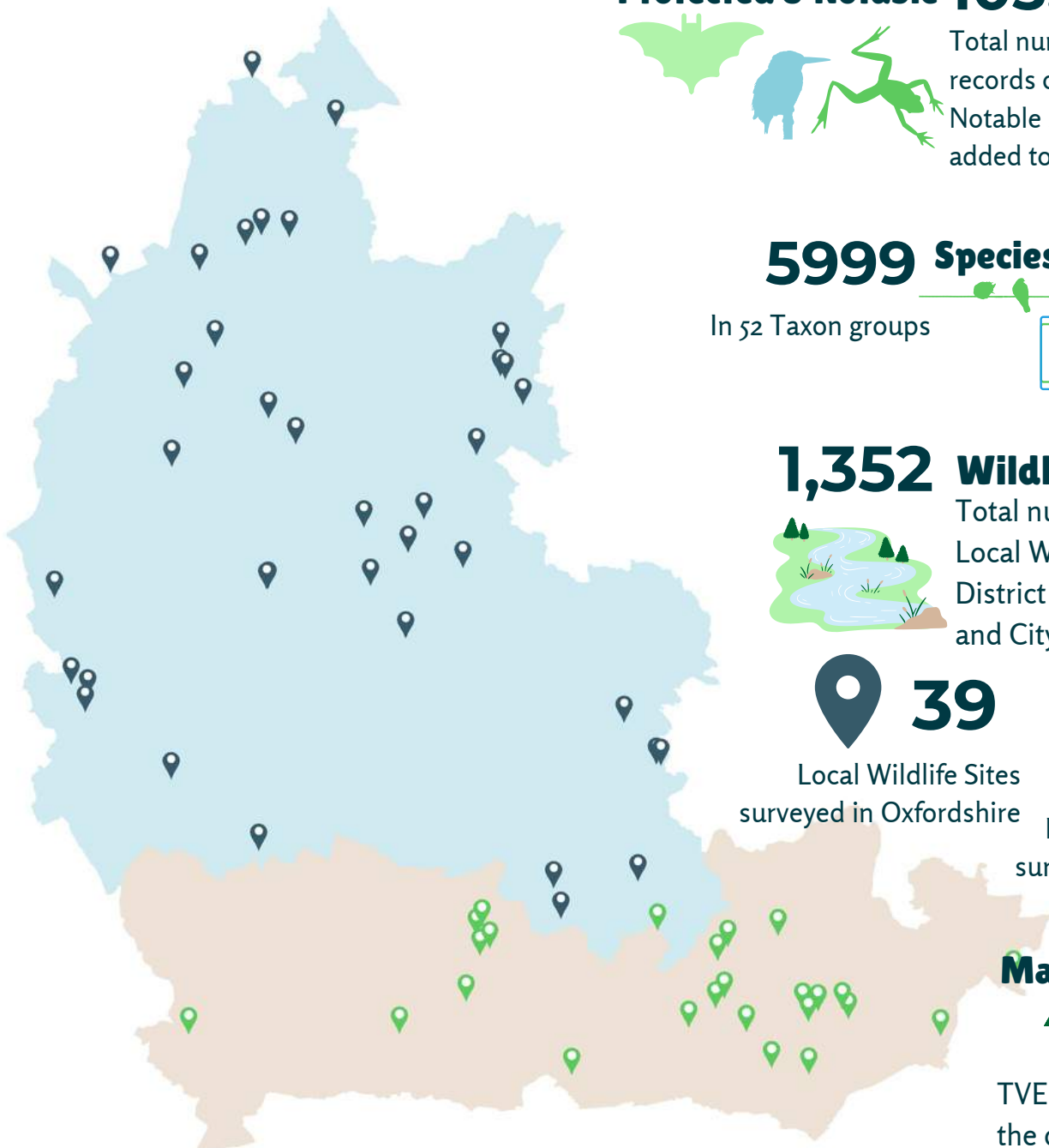
32

Local Wildlife Sites surveyed in Berkshire

Mapped Habitat

↑ 9.65%

TVERC has improved the detail in habitat data through ongoing reviews



Recording Community

Supporting the recording community is an essential part of the work TVERC carries out to help them further their aims and to ensure the region has people committed to monitoring and recording the environment and its wildlife. Most of our species records come from local naturalists or wildlife groups. These dedicated individuals voluntarily observe local wildlife and share their sightings. These observations can be part of organised surveys or incidental records from their gardens or walk. This valuable information helps us understand and protect our environment.

82% from Biological
Recorders

The majority of our species records come from volunteers



No. of Recorders 1620



Data imported from 1620 recorders

Data agreements

We have data exchange agreements in place with over 52 local groups who regularly send us their data. In many cases we also send them our data in return to support their local conservation work. Each group is welcome to decide its own terms for sharing data with us, for instance if they want to restrict the location information that TVERC provides to ecological consultants working on behalf of developers.

Renewed and new data agreements

- Earth Trust
- River Thames Conservation Trust
- Radley College
- Central Oxfordshire Ringing Group
- Amphibian and Reptile Conservation
- Berks & South Bucks Bat Group
- The Letcombes Conservation Group



Recorders' Conference

Our Recorders' Conferences took place October 2023 and March 2024, an opportunity to come together and hear about some of the incredible wildlife recording and conservation work that is going on in Berkshire and Oxfordshire. This year with a special focus on Local Nature Recovery Strategies for both counties. Thank you so much to all who attended our conference, and special thanks to our speakers and workshop hosts.



Autumn Recorders' Conference



📍 Oracle, Thames Valley Park, Reading
 👤 35 attendees
 🗣️ 8 speakers
 📖 3 workshops

Spring Recorders' Conference

📍 Cholsey Gray Hall, Wallingford
 👤 63 attendees
 🗣️ 16 speakers
 📖 3 workshops

Recorders' Grant



4 grants worth over £3000

We have supported many great projects with our Recorders' Grant scheme, which is administered by Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment (TOE). It is open to local wildlife organisations in Oxfordshire and Berkshire and can provide funding for equipment, books, training and more.

Funding awarded to:

- Biodiversity and Natural History of Blenheim's High Park book publication
- Andy Byfield Plants & Gardens botanical surveys in Cothill – Frilford
- Central Oxford Ringing Group for bird rings, mist nets, and poles
- West Oxfordshire Farmland Bird Project for mist nets and poles



©Noah Walker

Students

Thank you to the six interns we have had with us from Oxford University. They have contributed to diverse data analysis projects, highlighting the numerous applications of environmental data in supporting research and guiding wildlife conservation efforts.

In addition to hosting micro-internships with Oxford University, we provide students with various benefits. These include access to our database and discounted entry to our conferences.



Oxford University micro internship 23-24

Review Of Methods For Analysing
Species Distribution Data
Roadkill Mapping
Road Verge Nature Reserve
Analysis Intern (MIP)

Engaging Community

TVERC is dedicated to enhancing environmental conservation in Berkshire and Oxfordshire by collaborating with local science and environmental organizations. By maintaining strong relationships with local recorders and recording groups, we aspire to remain the central hub for biological recording in the region.

In 2023, TVERC organised the City Nature Challenge, recording 1,096 observations of 458 species with 111 participants. We also participated in events like the Biodiversity Net Gain Virtual Symposium and the Local Biodiversity Data Virtual Symposium, and engaged with groups such as the Oxfordshire Ornithological Society and CAG Oxfordshire.

On February, 2024, TVERC joined the Nature Education Workshop to support the GSCE in Natural History and the National Education Nature Park, focusing on ecological knowledge, wellbeing, and community-building for teenagers.

The year concluded with TVERC attending the Benson Area Nature Group event 'Wild About Benson'. The event attracted 718 visitors, providing a platform to discuss TVERC's work and learn about other ongoing projects.



We live in a better environment in Berkshire and Oxfordshire **because decisions are made using our data, information and services**



Data Searches



1043

6%

Data search
requests



Your records are being used more than ever before!

This means that the records that local wildlife recorders submit – whether sent directly to us, submitted to iRecord or sent via national recording schemes – are being used for a wide range of purposes, including development planning, research, neighbourhood planning, student projects and lots more.

To request access to TVERC data, please submit a request via our [website](#)

Data Provision to Partners



TVERC continues to provide updated datasets to our partners, ensuring compliance with planning policy and wildlife legislation.

These data inform decisions on conservation efforts, land management, and minimising environmental impacts

Projects

We are creative and innovative, using these to drive our development, enhance our systems and processes, and offer solutions to interpret natural environment data

Chimney Meadows

Floral Monitoring

Chimney Meadows, one of BBOWT's largest nature reserve, has undergone a remarkable transformation since 2004. The project, one of the UK's largest of its kind, involved seeding 70 hectares with green hay from ancient meadows. TVERC joined forces with BBOWT, conducting detailed surveys of 15 fields, assessing restoration outcomes and changes post-2007 floods. With 1,325 plant records and 82 species identified, 29 of which are characteristic of lowland meadows, the findings will guide BBOWT's conservation strategies and support future reversion projects, ensuring the meadows' role as a vital wildlife habitat.



Hutchcomb's Copse

The Oxfordshire Badger Group (OBG) recently acquired Hutchcomb's Copse, a 2-acre site of ancient oak woodland near Oxford City, with the aim to preserve it as a permanent wildlife habitat.

A baseline habitat survey by TVERC identified the site's majority as lowland mixed deciduous woodland with mature trees exhibiting decay features, providing habitat for various fauna. A grassland glade within the Copse also offers diverse habitats.

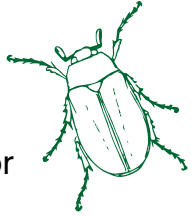
These findings will guide OBG's long-term management and conservation efforts.



For more information on the Oxfordshire Badger Group and Hutchcomb's Copse, please visit the [Oxfordshire Badger Group website](#).

Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Following on from the 5-county pilot program in 2020, TVERC had been tasked by both Oxfordshire & Berkshire's teams to undertake mapping and analysis work for the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS).



First steps involved identifying and mapping the areas in each county that was currently of high importance for biodiversity – including irreplaceable habitats and designated sites.

While each team began outreach to collect info and data from external agencies, community groups, farmers & landowners, and others, the TVERC team researched the most effective method for mapping the myriad of habitats and measures needed to design the LNRS map. After deciding to use Systematic Conservation Planning (SCP) powered by the analysis tool Marxan, TVERC is now in the midst of iterating through various configurations of the LNRS maps based on input from each county's team.

TVERC was also tasked to develop a County Species Long List for the LNRS for both counties. Following Defra's guidelines, TVERC compiled draft lists of species recorded in the last 30 years that are on the National Red List with a Threatened or Near Threatened status.

From November 2023 to January 2024, TVERC collaborated with over 60 species specialists through email and video conferencing to review these drafts. An engagement exercise in December 2023 sought feedback on which species to keep, remove, or add. This process led to the final lists: Berkshire's LNRS included 1,408 species across 25 Taxon Groups, and Oxfordshire's LNRS included 879 species across 26 Taxon Groups. The engagement improved the lists and sparked discussions on species inclusion.

Find out more about:

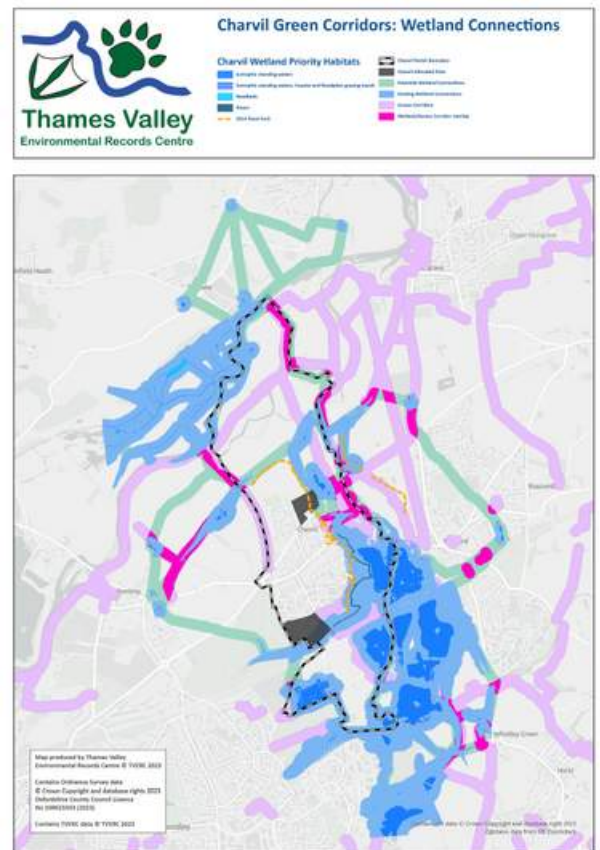
[Oxfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy](#) [Berkshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy](#)



Charvil Green Corridors

TVERC have identified a network of green corridors in Charvil to aid their Neighbourhood Plan. This included some discussion with locals and representatives from the parish council. These corridors, based on modelled habitat networks and Public Rights of Way, are designed to bolster the movement of both wildlife and residents, fostering a harmonious coexistence within our natural landscape.

As the Charvil Neighbourhood Plan undergoes meticulous examination by a Planning Inspector, TVERC advocates for the incorporation of robust policies that will not only safeguard these existing green lifelines but also encourage the creation of proposed green corridors.



Habitats & Species Trends South & Vale



South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils are working together to produce a Joint Local Plan that will guide development in the districts to 2041. TVERC gathered evidence on changes in land use, habitats, and species over the past 20 to 30 years, which shows:

- Built environment growth in the districts exceeded Oxfordshire and national rates.
- Woodland/tree cover has increased, while grassland/arable habitat has decreased. Much of the lost grassland has been converted into woodland/tree cover or built-up area.
- Woodland species have generally fared better than grassland species, reflecting national trends. The decline in grassland species is likely due to a reduction in both the quantity and quality of grassland habitat.

Enhancing habitat quality, especially grassland/arable, is crucial for biodiversity and can be influenced by local actions and policies.

Biodiversity Net Gain **BNG**

During 2023, TVERC undertook a number of Biodiversity Net Gain projects in Berkshire for local and parish councils. There may be opportunities for habitat creation and restoration works at certain council-owned sites, funded by developers, where development proposals cannot deliver biodiversity net gain on site. Off-site habitat creation or restoration projects create additional biodiversity value to offset the losses on development sites.

Surveys were conducted at four sites, ranging from 5 to 30.5 hectares in size and varying in complexity, to establish the baseline condition of existing habitats. The habitats assessed included grasslands, woodlands, hedgerows, scrub, individual and lines of trees, ditches, ponds, and a lake. Additionally, a River Condition Assessment was performed at one site adjacent to the River Loddon.



Communications



54,012

TVERC website
page views



1418

X followers

6%



639

Facebook
followers

7%



709

Instagram
followers

14%



503

LinkedIn followers

17%



704

TVERC mailing list
subscribers

3.5%

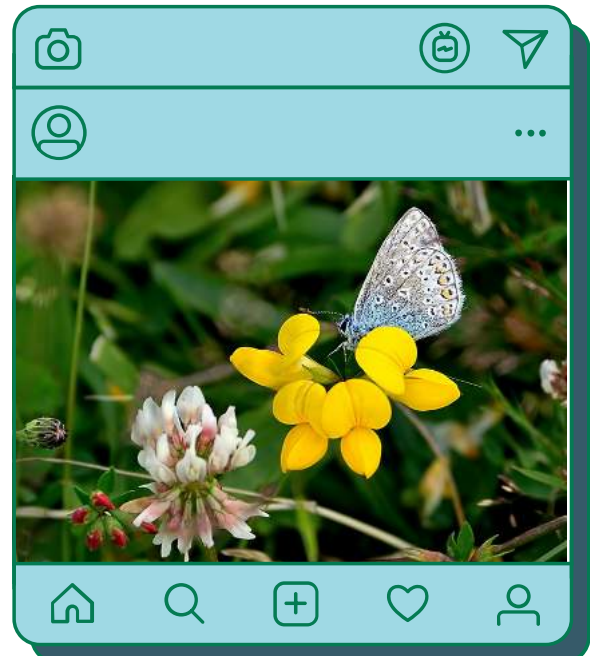


We are committed to enhancing our communication efforts. Our mission is to solidify TVERC's position as the central node for biological recording in Berkshire and Oxfordshire. We're focused on showcasing the vital role our recorders play, not only to our partners but also to the wider circle of data users. In our journey to secure a thriving future for biological recording, we're actively engaging our community through various communication outlets.

Our bi-monthly news bulletin and yearly newsletter serve as spotlights for our active participation in diverse projects, as well as a source for conservation news and happenings throughout Berkshire and Oxfordshire

Additionally, we've established a dynamic presence across key social media channels, providing regular updates and insights that strengthen our bond with the community.

If you don't already subscribe to our mailing list, we'd love you to do so!
[Sign up now](#)



Staff Volunteers

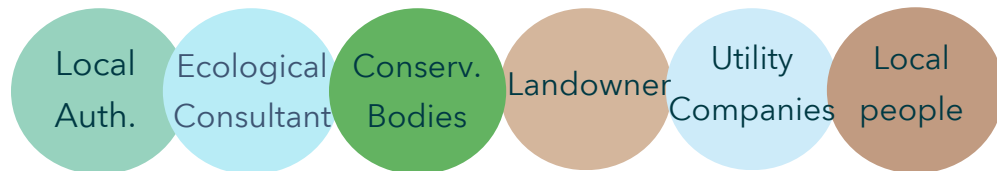


We employ a well-staffed, effective, and motivated workforce with value and respected staff and volunteers, who retain and develop their skills, expertise, and knowledge

As a not-for-profit organisation, surplus income is reinvested in services except for Reserve funds. TVERC, an internal unit of OxonCC, operates with a balanced budget annually and maintains a separate Reserve account.



We are funded from a variety of sources, contributing to the annual cost of collating and managing the TVERC database, allowing for cost-effective services.



A significant part of our income is allocated to staff and volunteer-related expenses. Staff and volunteers contribute valuable time to projects, data searches, and licenses, which are crucial for TVERC's services and data products, adding value for funders.



We are lucky to have a fantastic team of volunteers helping with data processing, species recording, and site surveys. Their assistance is vital for managing and entering data into our database, which is where they primarily focus their efforts.

9

Volunteers

94

Volunteer days

£14,684

Equivalent cost

Financial Summary

	23/24	22/23	21/22
Income			
Local authorities SLA	146,452	140,570	128,915
Environment Agency SLA	15,859	15,104	15,104
Commercial data searches	204,695	170,248	182,197
Commercial data licences	49,838	33,728	17,039
Projects	126,750	80,159	84,259
Donations	877	659	150
Reserve fundng	69,209	78,157	
Total	613,680	518,625	427,664
Expenditure			
Salaries, expenses, training	465,183	424,250	284,170
Project expenses	2,026	4,231	3,322
Overheads	4192	4,463	7,885
Premises (paid 'in kind' by OCC)	17,404	16,575	16,575
Recorders Fund and Conference	3,887	3,726	2,788
Investment in service	16,017	8,797	466
Total	508,709	462,042	310,531

Stay in touch

Thames Valley Environmental
Records Centre (TVERC)

c/o Oxfordshire County Council

County Hall, New Road

Oxford, OX1 1ND



01865 8155451



www.tverc.org



tverc@oxfordshire.gov.uk

