



Waterlife
Recovery
Trust

Vision and Strategy 2026-2031

A Mink-Free GB

INTRODUCTION

Brought to Britain for fur-farming a century ago, American mink escaped their cages or were deliberately released and have been chewing their way through our naïve waterside wildlife for over half of that time. From northern Scotland to the south coast of England, from west Wales to East Anglia, no creature was safe and some species were especially vulnerable. Mink are responsible for the loss of 97% of our water voles and the wiping out of entire colonies of seabirds, together with the loss of countless hole-nesting birds like kingfishers and sand martins. Even herons fall victim to these accomplished, fearless predators.

Until very recently, the prospect of removing every single mink from Great Britain and its hundreds of offshore islands was unthinkable, the task insurmountable. But perhaps for not much longer. A landscape-scale trial based on the dedication of thousands of volunteer citizen conservationists, guided by an evidence-based strategy and using innovative, humane techniques, has achieved the seemingly impossible. Pioneered and led by the Waterlife Recovery Trust (WRT), a conservation achievement of global importance is now within our grasp.

If achieved, the removal of all mink - eradication - would be far more humane, far less expensive and have infinitely greater conservation benefits than the population control efforts in practice today. In an attempt to limit the damage, mink have been trapped and shot by farmers, gamekeepers, conservation NGOs, drainage companies, fishing bailiffs, smallholders and domestic poultry keepers for decades. These efforts often reduced the problem, but other mink would always replace those removed; there seemed no hope of being able to free native wildlife of mink predation entirely from even one county, let alone Britain as a whole. If it were to be possible, eradication would be more humane, far more beneficial to native wildlife and far less expensive than trying to limit mink numbers in perpetuity.

A recent landscape-scale mink eradication

trial in eastern England has shown that eradication is now possible, and that an exciting opportunity now exists to fix a century-old, man-made problem. WRT, supported and guided by conservation NGOs, the farming community, internal drainage boards, Government agencies and over 1,000 volunteers, has freed over 11,000 sq km (8.5% of England) of mink within five years. Through donations and the winning of large-scale competitive grants, WRT is already in the process of eradicating American mink from half the counties of England, with a mink-free GB as the objective. And the problem is not restricted to Britain; American mink are causing similarly catastrophic damage to native wildlife in Europe and southern South America. Success on our island will have profound, beneficial conservation impacts on a global scale.

ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2025 AND EARLY 2026

All of WRT's objectives for 2025, as set out in the 2030 Vision and Strategy paper, were achieved, and in many cases exceeded. Specifically:

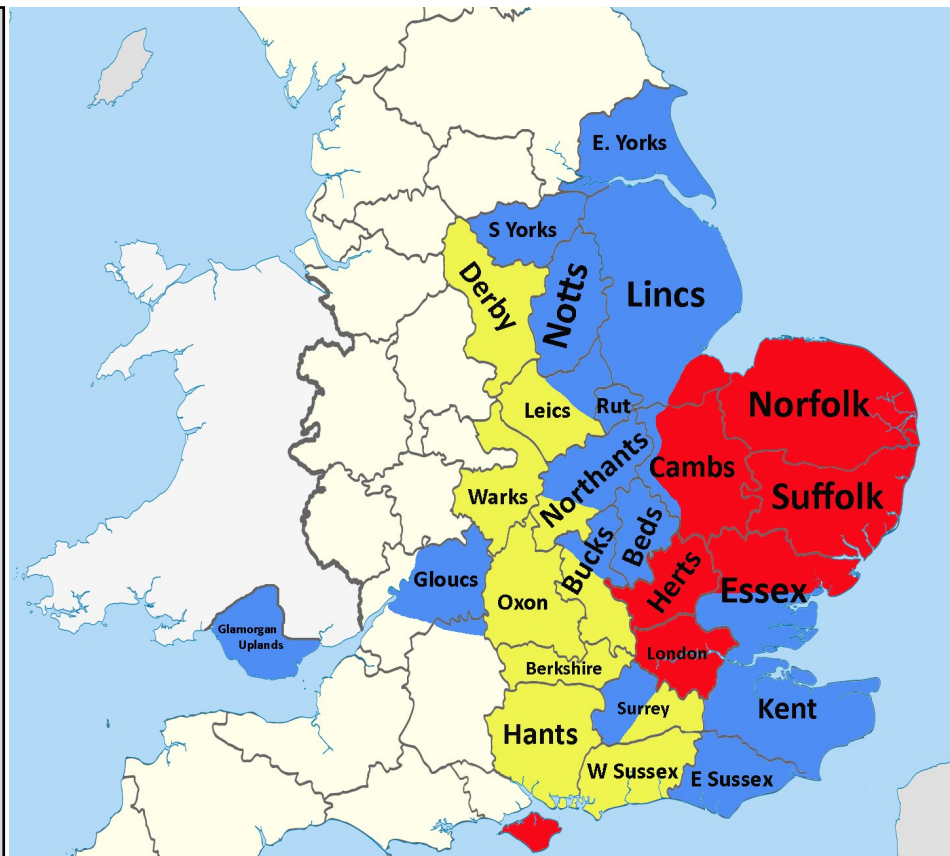
Objective	Outcome
Further reducing the level of mink (and mink predation) in Lincs, Rutland, Cambs, Beds, Northants, Bucks, Herts, Essex and North London (collectively 18% of England) to less than 20% of original.	All achieved; some now to less than 5%
Bringing all carcass analysis and scientific results up to date.	✓
Expanding our reach in Wales, western Scotland, Yorkshire and southeast England.	Amplly achieved
Publishing at least one peer-reviewed scientific paper.	Martin & Baker (trial success paper)
Completing eradication of mink on the Scottish island of Lismore.	✓
Maintaining Norfolk and Suffolk free of mink.	✓
Rolling out a comprehensive trap network across at least 50% of our new Waterlife Recovery Southeast area (comprising Hants, E&W Sussex, Surrey, Kent, Berks and South London).	✓

Map showing WRT operational coverage as of mid-2026.

Red: mink free.

Blue: comprehensive trapping network in place or fully funded and in progress.

Yellow: area funded by new Species Recovery grants (to save water voles)





Our *Vision* is to see native wildlife and ecology recovering and flourishing in a countryside free of American mink .

Our *Mission* is to lead the drive towards a mink-free GB by example, with animal welfare and community participation at the core of our work and science at the heart of our strategy.



WRT is ambitious and innovative. We lead and inspire community driven, humane, collaborative conservation underpinned by science.

Innovative

WRT has pioneered a humane, efficient and effective way to remove mink, combining new technology with age-old field craft.

Visionary

Our goal is a mink-free Great Britain, giving nature the chance to recover from a century of human-caused catastrophic damage. This would be the world's largest invasive predator eradication operation, by far.

Community-driven

At the heart of our work is an army of volunteer citizen-conservationists dedicated to freeing their local wildlife of the devastation caused by mink predation.

Collaborative

We work in close partnership with non-governmental organisations and Governments alike.

Evidence-led

Our strategy is guided by cutting edge science, in partnership with Cambridge University.

STRATEGIC AIMS

A mink-free GB: the removal of mink from Britain and its many offshore islands to allow the recovery of native wildlife.

Our ultimate objective is the eradication of American mink across Britain and its offshore islands. Evidence demonstrates that mink can be entirely removed from a landscape, county or even a country within five years of the establishment of a comprehensive trap network, and that such a network takes up to a year to establish after the necessary funding has been secured. The full economic cost of freeing one square km of England, Wales or most of Scotland is £250 at 2024 prices. Only governments could provide this level of funding in one tranche, and there is no indication that the English, Welsh or Scottish governments are likely to do so any time soon, so we must assume that success will be achieved over a period of time longer than five or six years. Our aim must be to secure funding from wherever it may be available - from both public and private sources. A realistic goal is that native wildlife will be freed of mink predation across Great Britain within a decade.

For this 10-year objective to be met, our five-year target must be to secure the funding for a mink-free GB in partnership with other organisations interested in the same objective. Additionally, we will continue and expand the work already underway across half the counties of England and several in Wales and Scotland, with the aim of eradicating mink from at least 35% of England by 2030 and 50% by 2031.



2027 OBJECTIVES

Working with partners and our army of volunteers, our aims in 2026 and 2027 include:

Further reducing the level of mink (and mink predation) in Lincs, Rutland, Leics, Beds, Northants, Bucks, Herts and Notts (collectively **14% of England**) to **less than 15% of original**.

Publishing at least two **peer-reviewed scientific papers** on our results to date.

Completing the eradication of mink in Essex and Cambridgeshire, realising the **dream of a mink-free East Anglia**

Establish a new comprehensive trapping network across **Gloucestershire** and adjacent **Warwickshire**. This will be the spring-board for a mink-free corridor across England from East coast to West coast.

Keeping Norfolk and Suffolk **free of mink**.

Rolling out a **comprehensive trap network** across the entirety of our **Waterlife Recovery Southeast area** (Hants, E&W Sussex, Surrey, Kent, Berks and South London).

Expanding our reach in **Wales, western Scotland, Yorkshire** and **NW England**.

5-YEAR OBJECTIVES

By 2031, in collaboration with other like-minded organisations, we will have:

Eradicated mink from <i>at least 50% of England</i>	Secured substantial mink-free bastions in Wales and Scotland	Secured finance to rid the British Isles of all remaining mink
		



**Water voles and
other native
wildlife freed of
mink predation
across 50% of
England by 2031**





Waterlife
Recovery
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Waterlife Recovery Trust is a charitable incorporated organisation registered in England & Wales (no. 1198223).
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