



NORFOLK WILDLIFE TRUST

Minutes of the Trust's 92nd Annual General Meeting
Friday 18th October 2019, 6.30pm
Simon Aspinall Wildlife Education Centre, Cley, Norfolk, NR25 7SA

Present: Bill Jordan (President)
Alice Liddle (Chair)
David Thompson (Trustee)
Lyndsay Whiteman (Treasurer)
63 Trustees and Members

In Attendance: Pamela Abbott (Chief Executive Officer)
Marion Riches (Executive Officer)
Senior Managers and other staff

The President welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending the Trust's 92nd AGM.

Apologies were received from Michael Baker, Tony Footitt, John Sharpe and John Snape.

FORMAL BUSINESS

Resolution 1

To receive the Report of Council and approve the Report and Audited Financial Statements for the year ending 31 March 2019.

The Treasurer presented a summary of the year's results which showed a record year for legacy income (£2.2m)

Proposed by: Martin Shaw

Seconded by: Garth Inman

Resolution 1: Approved

Resolution 2

To re-appoint Larking Gowen LLP as the Trust's auditors and authorise Council to determine their remuneration.

Proposed by: Geoff Randall

Seconded by: Phil Norton

Resolution 2: Approved

Resolutions 3, 4 and 5

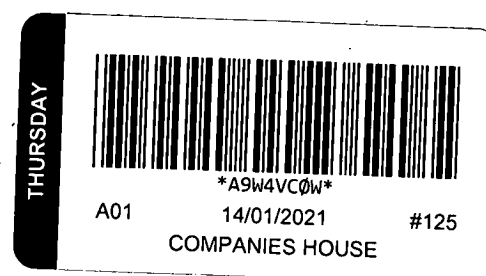
To elect members of Council:

Resolution 3 – Stephen Cale

Proposed by: Angela Turner

Seconded by: Mike Toms

Resolution 3: Approved



Resolution 4 – Professor Andrew Clarke

Proposed by: Tom Green

Seconded by: Jane Hardy

Resolution 4: Approved

Resolution 5 – Scott Pinching

Proposed by: Hugh Back

Seconded by: Sue Roe

Resolution 5: Approved

Special Resolution

To approve adopt the revised Articles of Association

The CEO noted that the changes proposed to the Articles of Association were to ensure inclusivity.

Proposed by: Sir Timothy Colman

Seconded by: Brendan Joyce

Special Resolution: Approved

There being no further business, the President closed the formal part of the AGM.

INFORMAL BUSINESS

1. The President handed over to David Thompson, Trustee and outgoing Chair, to give his address, of which a condensed transcript is given below:

'Welcome. I appreciate you all turning out – for some it's quite a journey across county, which is why we seek to vary the location from year to year. The eagle-eyed may have noted that I am addressing you as 'Trustee', not as Chair, as the Board recently and unanimously approved Alice Liddle as the new Chair. In the spring, I had indicated my intention to stand down within the year. Alice offered herself as candidate, having been on the board for a while playing a vital part both in the Hickling Group and latterly in the Finance, Audit and Risk Group.

Another and hugely significant change, which actually took place during the reporting year was, of course, the stepping down of Brendan as CEO. He did not disappear completely, however, as he returned to assist in the re-shaping of NWS.

May I also take this opportunity to welcome Lyndsay Whiteman, our new Treasurer, who took over from Jon Humphreys who was our Treasurer for 14 years. Also, welcome to our new Trustees. It is great to see the Board replenished with such high profile individuals. Pamela's first year has been very much marked by getting to know the organisation and its people. She undertook a review of staff satisfaction – which was overall very positive but also instructive - and of staff benefits. This has resulted in the Board approving some enhancements.

David North, the Head of People and Wildlife, retired at the end of September. He has played such a huge part in the life and impact of the Trust, and we wish him and his wife all the best going forwards.

With regards to Brexit, all I can really report is that the Board is confident that the team has assessed the extent and impact of the basic payments and HLS funding on our work and obligations and considered what might happen going forward.

You will have seen, I hope, reference in the Annual Report to the Surestart Project and how that is going. Some may not see this as 'core business' but we see it as having great value.

Last year we have benefitted from the participation of two conservation-students from Easton College as non-voting observers on Council. Their input into discussions has been topical and relevant. I very much hope this initiative – or similar – will continue.

We have continued to consider further land acquisition opportunities as they have arisen – and we remain committed to increasing the portfolio with considerable support from potential donors to fund land acquisition.

Last year we focused our efforts on how best to manage and improve the new areas of land we have become responsible for at Hickling. There has been an extensive consultation. It has led to some exciting pointers as to the directions of change.

We are seeing a subtle shift in our policy towards land acquisition to strengthen and better protect what we already have.

Acquisition brings with it responsibilities. It may surprise you to hear but it was more than a decade ago that we began to encourage and receive legacies for acquisition with a substantial element available for restoration. This helps the work to be sustainable and we are enormously grateful for the generosity of donors and those leaving legacies who demonstrate this perspective.

Over the nearly 5 years I have been involved on the Board, we have seen the acquisition of land and water at Hickling Broad, Pigney's Wood, Watering Farm adjacent to Thompson Common and Southrepps Common.

I am sure I can speak for all of us on the Board when I say what a privilege it is to participate and to influence the direction and decisions of the Trust. It

As this is to some extent a swan-song for me, on behalf of the Board I would like to pay credit to the staff - their passion and expertise - which underpins all the work of the Trust.'

2. David Thompson handed over to Alice Liddle, Chair, to give her address, of which a condensed transcript is given below:

'Thank you, David. I heartily echo David's thanks on behalf of all the Trustees to the dedicated staff of NWT. I too want to welcome our new Trustees and to say how much I am looking forward to working with you.

I am looking forward to the job as Chair which is proving to be busy and stimulating. As a Trust we have such a lot to look forward to, despite the current uncertainties in a likely post-Brexit world and despite the environmental challenges that the whole world is facing. I say we have a lot to look forward to because Norfolk Wildlife Trust is a robust and confident charity, a well-supported charity - thank you – a charity doing great work and striving to attract funding from a broad range of sources. There are some great initiatives in the pipeline not least in the run up to the Trust's centenary in 2026. The Trust will continue to make a positive difference to the health and wellbeing of nature and people in our wonderful county.

I am going to finish by saying a big thank you to the trustees who are retiring after this AGM. Together they have served as trustees on a voluntary basis for an aggregate of 23 years which shows huge commitment to a cause they feel passionately about.

Geoff Randall

Geoff has been a Trustee since 2011. He has been fascinated by wildlife since his childhood. His considerable professional experience as a Chief Architect has made him invaluable to the Trust as a "second pair of eyes" into the design brief, development and mitigation of risk factors involved in the creation of the Aspinall Centre here at Cley and improvements to the visitor centres at Hickling and Holme and appropriate public access. His experience in the private sector has meant the Trust has benefitted from his skills in terms of governance and accountability. He has been a key member of the Finance, Audit and Risk group of the Trust. We are delighted that, whilst leaving the Council of Trustees, he remains chair of the West Norfolk members group, staying committed to the conservation cause in Norfolk – both landscape-scale and in the care and protection of small County Wildlife Sites. Thank you, Geoff, for everything you have done.

Phil Norton

Phil has been a Trustee since 2012. As a senior solicitor and expert in charity law, Phil has devoted his deep knowledge and expertise to the Trust to ensure continuing compliance with charity rules, to deal with governance topics, address risk and to develop NWT's constitution. Phil is a trustee of several charities and organisations with practical experience in how different types of board operate but at the same time has unstintingly given his time to the Trust as if it has been his only job. His wisdom will be much missed. Thank you, Phil.

Mike Toms

Mike has been a Trustee since 2016. He is Head of Communications and an associate director of the BTO, responsible for communication, marketing and presenting and promoting BTO's monitoring programme. He is, of course, well known for his research, books and talks, including here at Cley. As such, he has brought his considerable scientific knowledge and understanding of a sister organisation to NWT and has been hugely important in his advice on marketing and communications as well as supporting organisational change over the past years in his role on the Nominations Group.

Thank you, Mike and thank you again, Geoff and Phil. But I'm going to leave our President, Bill Jordan, to say a few words about the hard act that I have to follow, namely David Thompson.'

3. The Chair handed over to the President who thanked David Thompson for his time on Council as a Trustee and Chair:

'David has been a Trustee since 2014 and Chair since 2016. On a review of the effectiveness of the Trustee body last year one trustee said: "If our current chair was any more effective, Superman would be worried about his job!" Not only has David been a great ambassador for the Trust in its outward-facing role but he has willingly volunteered hours of his time in leading the trustees in their strategic role, doing so inclusively, diplomatically and positively. He has seen through the smooth transition from Brendan Joyce to Pamela Abbott as CEO and the appointment of Lyndsay Whiteman as new treasurer. Other key events have happened on David's watch, not least the acquisition of the jewel that is Pigneys Wood and the purchase of Hickling – one of the biggest and most complex in the history of the Trust. We hope that David will be able to look back on his time as Trustee and Chair with well-deserved pride. Thank you, David'

4. The President handed over to the Chief Executive to give her address, of which a condensed transcript is given below:

'This month the UK State of Nature Report found that 41% of species in the UK have declined in abundance since 1970 and 15% of species in the UK are threatened with extinction. We know that the Biodiversity 2020 targets will not be met. Earlier this year a UN report on the future of biodiversity found that globally 25% of species are threatened with extinction. There is a need for urgent action and our government, along with governments from around the world, has signed up to delivering the necessary transformative change.

At Norfolk Wildlife Trust we've been delivering transformative change since 1926 which began here at Cley marshes with the establishment of a Bird Sanctuary. Since then we have worked to bring back the wild at scale across the county. We have created new wetlands at Wissey as compensation for the future loss of habitat at Cley and where I saw my first marsh harrier food pass earlier this year. All across Norfolk we are bringing back nature and we have an ambition to create more wild spaces so that more species can return and thrive. We have joined together and restored wetlands at Upton and Hickling and created space for nature to flourish. We've overseen the reintroduction of the Pool Frog at Thompson Common and we have seen Purple Hairstreak butterflies returning to the restored woodland at Foxley. We took over the management of Pigneys Wood from a community group who had planted a diversity of habitats and this year nature came in the shape of 10,000 Ivy Bees, a colony discovered by David North in the week of his retirement as the Trust's Head of People and Wildlife. Even in the visitor centre park here at Cley, a Little Ringed Plover made its nest and here too, on the marshes, Bittern have been heard booming for a month for the first time in over 11 years. So when we make space for nature, nature comes.

This summer, along with colleagues from Norfolk Rivers Trust and the National Trust in Norfolk, I went to the Knepp Estate Wildland in Sussex written about so eloquently by Isabella Tree in her book 'Rewilding'. It was wonderful to see how nature has reclaimed the formerly farmed land and we all came away thinking that the work that we do here in Norfolk is just as wonderful and just as amazing.

Inspired by the visit to Knepp Estate, we hosted a Rewilding Norfolk workshop at Cley. Charlie Burrell, the owner of Knepp, came to talk to around 50 landowners and land managers from across Norfolk alongside those leading rewilding projects more locally. Landowners shared their successes and concerns and talked about how we could all do more to connect habitats and to make more space for nature in Norfolk.

As well as landowners, we have also been working with communities across the county. At Hickling, where the Trust with your support made a significant land purchase in 2017, we have been carrying out a visioning and spatial planning process. We have been listening to stories of how local people have been enjoying Hickling Broad throughout their lives and to the ambitions of local clubs. We wanted to capture everyone's appreciation and enjoyment of the Broad and weave that into our ambitions for the area and for nature.

We're also trying as an organisation to walk the walk as well as talking to talk so we've had an environmental audit carried out of our own operations. We want to demonstrate environmental sustainability throughout all of the ways that we work, and we'll be putting that into our next plan leading up to a centenary for 2021-2026. We will also align our ambition to reach out and connect habitats across the landscape with the UN decade of ecosystem restoration. We will support and work with landowners, as well as acquiring and restoring new land to a more biodiverse state.

We've been working with a collaboration of Norfolk and Suffolk county councils, the Local Enterprise Partnership, UEA and a large number of other partners to create a natural capital map of Norfolk, and Suffolk. This will enable us to prioritise projects that not only create

more areas for wildlife across Norfolk but also sequester carbon and increase our county's resilience to climate change.

So how we can all take action in the face of such a crisis in biodiversity and in climate? I think we can start by sharing our stories. We're gathered here today as a group of people who really value wildlife and nature. We can share our stories of how amazing wildlife is, we could maybe take somebody for a walk in one of our special places. We could be bold with our vision for the future that will really make a difference for nature for the future for our people for young people and for all of those who haven't yet had a chance to experience the wonders of nature in Norfolk. So let's all be bold, be optimistic and go out and make a difference for nature in Norfolk.'

5. A number of questions from the floor were received as follows:

- Gordon Evans requested a breakdown of the cash in hand and at the bank as shown in the Annual Report
The Treasurer stated that of the monies held by the Trust £2.1m was held in restricted funds for specific projects, £4.2m was designated for the future Business Strategy and £0.1m was general funds.
- Gordon Evans asked for clarification of the £1.8m shown in 'Other Debtors' in the Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2019
The Treasurer stated that most of this money was a legacy amount that was confirmed in the year but had not yet been received.
- Gordon Evans noted the £72k contribution to RSWT and asked Trustees to look at what the Trust would get in return for this contribution and whether the Trust could afford the amount.
The CEO stated that RSWT does provide some benefits to the Trust, such as campaigning resource and collective purchase of some systems. RSWT's new plan will be examined and discussed with their new Chief Executive when recruited.
- Nick Sandford noted that the verges in Norfolk are being cut more than once a year.
John Hiskett, interim People & Wildlife Manager, responded saying that the Council did start the process of cutting the verges just once a year because of the Trust's influence but this reverted back following influence from residents.
- Richard Price asked for reassurance to manage Cley for its long term survival.
The CEO stated that discussions for a new cut at Cley had been ongoing.
- Valerie Woodrow asked for an update on the ground breeding bird in the Cley Visitor Centre car park.
The CEO stated that the little ringed plover had fledged, but had not been seen since.

Following a break for refreshments an illustrated talk on 'Thirty years of biomanipulation in the Norfolk Broads: restoring clear water, submerged plants and fish communities' was given by Dr Martin Perrow.

The President thanked Martin for his informative and interesting talk and thanked everyone for attending the AGM, wishing them all a good evening.