

Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust



Nottinghamshire
Wildlife Trust

Minutes of the 58th Annual General Meeting Held at 11.15 am on Saturday 6th November 2021 on Zoom

Attendance

58 members attended

Paul Wilkinson (PW), the Trust's CEO, welcomed the civic dignitaries, Vice-Presidents, Trustees, members, and staff and thanked them for attending the 58th AGM of Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust, which this year is on Zoom. PW gave guidance on the Zoom format and the polling function. Members were given a trial run on the voting process.

1. Appointment of Chair

PW proposed that in accordance with Article 6.3 of the Trust's Articles of Association, Nick Parsons (NP) the Trust's Chair, be appointed Chair of the meeting. This was proposed by Martin Willis and seconded by Tom Huggon.

2. Apologies for absence

NP thanked the Vice-Presidents and members for attending. Apologies were received from Professor Edward Peck Vice Chancellor of Nottingham Trent University, Mike Quigley Chairman of Nottinghamshire County Council, Councillor Jack Baulker, Councillor Penny Rainbow Chairman of Newark and District Council, Mrs P Grayling and Gwen Bragg.

3. Minutes of the 57th AGM

The minutes of the 57th AGM held on 21st November 2020 were proposed by Valerie Holt and seconded by Mike Spencer. By poll vote of 37 the meeting AGREED the minutes as a true and accurate record.

4. Matters arising from the minutes

NP asked if there were any questions from the minutes. There was none.

5. Annual Trustees' Report for the year ended 31st March 2021

A presentation was given by the Chair, of the Trust's activities and highlights of the year from the Annual Trustees Report.

NP began by saying that the Covid year had brought some disruption but not derailment, staff had worked hard to continue to deliver excellent work resulting in a stronger position at the end than at the beginning. The twin points of focus remained as the climate and ecological crises.

Early contingency planning had included the use of furlough and securing funding from the National Lottery Heritage Emergency Fund. A strong performance from EMEC and the use of online events around Rewilding and Beavers publicity kept our supporters connected to us. The trading company took advantage of their forced closure to innovate online with bird food deliveries as well as time to expand the farm shop and its range.

The appointment of new staff during lockdown had remained a priority including 3 new Senior Managers. Dan Boyes – Consultancy Manager for EMEC, John Rattray – Head of Nature Recovery South and Liz Fleuty – Head of People and Nature.

Leading by our own example had led to our first ever carbon audit and from that a Carbon Reduction Strategy as well as a strong focus on maintaining contact with our essential volunteers through to managing a safe return for them.

All of NWT's reserves were left open to the public during lockdown – taking solace in nature a well-documented health benefit. In fact, there were record numbers visiting the reserves – figures were up by 80% year on year. Our most visited reserve officially became owned by the Trust, and we completed some other largescale works including a heathland restoration of Rainworth Heath.

From an advocacy point of view the Trust provided strategic input via the County Minerals Plan and influenced both Local Plans and major proposals e.g. The Garden Village at Bassetlaw. As host of the River Idle Catchment Partnership, we worked collaboratively with stakeholders to conserve wildlife on land and in the river. As well as strengthening links with Local Authority Leaders some high-level links have been established to influence the work of the Midlands Engine and the emerging EM Development Corporation.

Our campaigning continued – fighting the badger cull in the Vale of Belvoir and getting fully involved with the plan to convert the demolished Broadmarsh Centre to become a natural green space. Many thousands of people supported our campaigns including fighting the IGas plan to extend fracking in North Notts a short distance from Misson Carr Reserve.

Embracing our diversity aims, we work across the county with local communities, businesses, local government, landowners, and individuals to bring about a wilder Notts where people and wildlife thrive. Giving us greater strength and breadth of thinking in our staff, volunteers and supports is important to us enabling us to reach a broad demographic. We have further work to do on this, but some gains have been achieved with the appointment of two Youth Trustees and Youth Forum.

Since April, we have reintroduced Beavers to the Idle Valley – bringing them back after an absence of 400 years. We are appointing “Wilder Nottinghamshire” officers at ANR and IVNR to connect with visitors and to inspire action for nature and successfully opposed plans for a luxury housing development threatening greenspace and habitat at Bramcote Ridge. We are continuing to stand shoulder to shoulder with local campaigners, opposing the Mill Hill quarry proposal opposite ANR.

Working with the whole WT movement under leadership of the RSWT. We have agreed two key targets in response to the ecological and climate crises:

- to help ensure that 30% of the UK’s land, water and seas are in recovery for nature by 2030
- to inspire at least 1 in 4 of the UK population to take action for nature

National targets are reflected in NWT’s new Wilder Nottinghamshire 2030 strategy which will be officially launched before the end of the year.

- Our work over the past 60 years has protected and enhanced many important places for nature in the county
- We have unparalleled knowledge of the wildlife and wild places in Notts and are firmly rooted in, supported by and accountable to the local community
- But the scale of the ecological and climate crises means we must now take a more radical and urgent approach

What next?

- 30% and 1 in 4 are stiff targets but are needed
- No one can be in any doubt about the seriousness of the situation
- “The World is at one minute to midnight” –Boris Johnson
- “Enough of brutalizing our biodiversity, enough of killing ourselves with carbon, enough of treating nature like a toilet...” –Antonio Guterres, UN Secretary-General
- “A war-like footing’ is needed to tackle the climate crisis“ –Prince Charles

We have ten years at most to reverse wildlife’s headlong decline

- Thousands are taking actions for wildlife and each of these makes a difference.
- ...but we need to do more and to do it faster
- Expect more campaigning from us

- We are grateful for the support of all our supporters but we shall be asking for more so we can do more
- Please join us on the green barricades

NP thanked everyone for their support, which is greatly appreciated, needed, and valued more than ever.

Following the presentation NP asked if members had any questions on the Annual Report.

As there were no further questions the Annual Trustees' Report was proposed by Ian Johnston and seconded by Tom Huggon. The meeting AGREED the report by a vote of 44.

6. Audited Accounts Report for year ended 31st March 2021

The Honorary Treasurer, Colin Gibson (CG) presented the accounts.

CG said in his introduction that the 2020-21 statutory accounts were on the Trust website. Key information is on page 14: a summary of income and expenditure, with balance sheets on page 15.

Against the odds in a year dominated by Covid the Trust had, by and large, a very good financial year to March 2021. We recorded a record surplus of £1.4m compared with £500k in the previous year and earlier deficits. CG stressed that this was, however, a unique year and that we need to keep a constant watch on our income streams and expenditure. Nevertheless, it did mean that we have been able to catch up on some long overdue work on our infrastructure and assets, carry out some desirable conservation work and increase our contingency funds.

Income was boosted by the one off £750k BIFFA award for the purchase of Attenborough and it was a spectacular year for our East Midlands Environmental Consultancy business. EMEC has developed the ability to carry out big infrastructure contracts on a national scale and several large contracts came to fruition in the year. The outcome is a magnificent one-off profit with purpose for nature. We were also supported through Covid with a hard won grant from the Lottery Heritage fund.

2020-21 was an exceptional one-off year for NWTTL (Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust Trading Limited) too, but not in such a positive way. Covid led to closure of the centres for an extended period and with trading restrictions at times it is not surprising that no profit was purpose was available. However, the team used the year to look ahead and plan and CG was optimistic that the current year results will be much improved.

Despite the problems of 2020-21 CG was pleased to report an 8.7% increase in membership income. He thanked members for their support and staying with us – at 91% our retention rate is higher than the average across Wildlife Trusts.

CG was delighted to report that after years of concern about cashflow and for reasons outlined earlier cash balances rose from £0.9m on 31 March 2020 to £1.5m at the year end. The EMEC commercial contract doubled our financial contingency cash balance to £200k and put £250k into long-term investments, offering a permanent income stream.

To show what this has meant in practice he explained that in the 2022-year NWT has allocated £250k to restore and renovate assets such as fences and structures on our reserves, as well as a much-needed facelift to our head office, TORS (The Old Ragged School). Budgeted work at Attenborough focused on water control features associated with the conditions of the purchase, as well as improvements to the car park and apron area. Two Wilder Nottinghamshire Officers at ANR and IVNR are now with in place to inspire more people to take action for nature and start their supporter journey with us.

CG repeated that 2020-21 was a year of one-offs. Next year our cash balances will be lower, albeit for positive reasons. Our strategic statement “We are Valued” says that we will never commit to the unsustainable. We can only deliver charitable benefits for nature at the pace, which our financial and other resources allow, ensuring that the fabric of our organisation is sustainable.

CG praised the Finance team who have worked to refine to finance systems including becoming increasingly paperless. He thanked Diane Lockwood for her advice and support.

CG asked for any questions, there were none.

The Treasurer’s report was proposed by Ian Johnston and seconded by Robert Armitage. The meeting AGREED the accounts with 41 votes.

7. The Appointment of Auditors

A slide was shown to members confirming Haines Watts willingness to be reappointed as auditors.

The re-appointment was proposed by Mike Spencer and seconded by Martin Willis. The meeting AGREED the appointment of Haines Watts as auditors with 44 votes.

8. Election of President, Vice-Presidents, and Members of the Council of NWT

NP read out the nominations for President and Vice Presidents. He then asked the meeting to re-elect the current President, Vice-Presidents.

President: Sir Andrew Buchanan Bt, KCVO

Vice-Presidents: The Lord Mayor of Nottingham
The Chair of Nottinghamshire County Council
The Chair of Ashfield District Council
The Chair of Bassetlaw District Council
The Chair of Newark & Sherwood District Council
The Mayor of Broxtowe
The Mayor of Gedling
The Mayor of Rushcliffe
The Executive Mayor of Mansfield District Council
The Vice Chancellor of Nottingham Trent University, Edward Peck

The Vice Chancellor of the University of Nottingham,
Shearer West
Sir. Martyn Poliakoff
Mike Dilger
John Holmes
Paddy Tipping
Rob Lambert

The nominations were proposed by Mike Spencer and seconded by Martin Willis. The meeting AGREED the appointments of President and Vice-Presidents with 43 votes.

NP read out the 3 nominations for trustees to be re-elected onto Council, Katherine Wilson, Emma Sherburn and Kedijah Eaves-O'Connor.

NP read out the nomination to become new trustee Ellie Brodie

The nominations were proposed by Martin Willis and seconded by Robert Armitage.

The meeting AGREED the re-appointments and appointments of trustees with a vote of 46.

Two trustees have stood down from Council this year, Rachel Richards, and Bill Logan. NP thanked them for their contributions and services given.

In addition, a longstanding VP had stood down due to relocating to Scotland. Graham Machin was thanked for his services to the Trust.

9. Any other competent business

There was no other business.

At the end of the meeting NP thanked Erin McDaid, Rachel Rutherford and Hattie Lavender for their work in pulling the meeting together. He thanked those attending for their support.

Meeting closed 12.20pm