

# Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust



Nottinghamshire

## Minutes of the 56<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting Held at 3.30 pm on 19<sup>th</sup> October 2019 at Forever Green, Ransom Wood, Mansfield

### Attendance

\*\* members were in attendance

#### 1. Appointment of Chair

Paul Wilkinson (PW), the Trust's CEO, welcomed the civic dignitaries, Vice-Presidents, Trustees, members, and staff and thanked them for attending the 56<sup>th</sup> AGM of Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust; an important day where the Trust's activities are presented. PW proposed that as the President Sir Andrew Buchanan was not present and although the Executive Vice Presidents were attending the meeting, in accordance with Article 6.3 of the Trust's Articles of Association, Ian Johnston (IJ), the Trust's Chair, be appointed Chair of the meeting. This was proposed by Valerie Holt and seconded by Tom Huggon. IJ then also welcomed civic dignitaries, Vice-Presidents, and members.

#### 2. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Sir Andrew Buchanan, President and the Mayor of Broxtowe Borough Council, Councillor Michael Brown.

#### 3. Minutes of the 55th AGM

The minutes of the 55th AGM held on 6<sup>th</sup> October 2018 were proposed by Graham Leigh Brown and seconded by Cally Keetley. By a show of hands the meeting AGREED the minutes as a true and accurate record.

#### 4. Matters arising from the minutes

IJ said that there were no controversial matters but would be happy to discuss any issues. There were none.

#### 5. Annual Trustees' Report for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019

A presentation was given by IJ of the Trusts activities and gave highlights of the year from the Annual Trustees Report.

The Trust with partners led by Nottinghamshire County Council was successful in gaining £2.45million Heritage Lottery funding for the Minor 2 Major project. This is a key project in Sherwood Forest which will enhance our work particularly with young people.

The Trust was involved in enhancing more than 600 ha priority habitats by working with mineral extraction operators.

The Trust engaged with a record number of people, including 1500 engaged with 30 Days Wild. Thousands saw murmurations at Attenborough and a successful Festival at Skylarks brought hundreds of people to the reserve.

The Trust's Keeping it Wild group now have their own reserve, Woodthorpe Meadow.

IJ was particularly pleased to say that a new Volunteer Co-ordinator post had been created to enable two way clear communication with volunteers.

The Trust continues to make progress towards financial stability, concentrating on projects being sustainable and with strengthened governance can look forward to the next few years with ambition despite challenges.

In the past year the Trust said goodbye to Rob Fitzsimons who steered the Trust through a difficult time and welcomed Paul Wilkinson as new Chief Executive who has already led a strategic review to reflect ambitious ideas around countryside nature recovery involving large scale community commitment.

IJ then highlighted some of the ways where the Trust had delivered its vision over the year.

### Delivering

The Trust established a review of its land holdings which came to a conclusion this year. The review group led by Trustee Robert Armitage was formed because in 2015 it became clear that management activity was spread too thinly and the Trust needed to prioritise. It was decided to sell a very small group of reserves.

The conservation department has spent a lot of time giving ecological advice to farmers, landowners, local authorities and major planning cases including HS2, shale gas energy schemes, minerals extraction and housing developments to secure appropriate protection, mitigation and ecological compensation.

The Trust has continued the badger vaccination programme.

The Trust is Catchment Host for the River Idle on behalf of Severn Trent Water. This covers 85000 ha working with farmers to improve soil management and water quality, clear non-native species and create new habitat for fish and water voles

### Engaging

Over the year volunteers and staff provided hundreds of events and activities across the county from walks and talks to training sessions on technical subjects including the Spider Watch, Idle Valley Autumn Fair and lecture series.

We continued work with Local Authorities to improve public green spaces for wildlife and to develop and support 'Friends Groups'.

The Trust has improved support and opportunities for volunteers by having a new Volunteer Co-ordinator role with a database of volunteers to better enhance communication. IJ highlighted how much the Trust is reliant on the good will of volunteers. Many have engaged with children through education activities, children's parties etc. 3570 children were engaged at Attenborough Nature reserve

## Influencing

Our Keeping it Wild group of young environmentalists goes from strength to strength, promoting its Nottingham for Nature manifesto and engaging in national policy campaigns. They joined young representatives from other Wildlife Trusts and staff from our UK Office at a Parliamentary Reception to push for a new Environment Bill.

NWT was represented on key strategic forums including Lowland Derbyshire & Nottinghamshire Local Nature Partnership, Nottingham City Green and Open Spaces Champions Group and Trent Gateway Steering Group

Staff and trustees met MPs across the parties to highlight issues including future legislation, Brexit and the 25 Year Environment Plan.

The Trust continued work with both local and national partners to highlight concerns over 'fracking' particularly at Misson Carr and sites in Sherwood Forest; including changing the Trust's stance to being "opposed" to fracking. A lot of work was done to try to prevent the work going ahead at Misson but now the aim is to hold the operators to account.

IJ then spoke of the Trust's current and future plans including finalising the new Strategic Framework which contains our long-term, and inter-connected, goals that will shape our future work:

The Trusts priorities for the coming year are:

Securing Attenborough Nature reserve.

Where our headquarters should be.

Continued focus on robust financial management and income generation.

Investing in development of staff and volunteers.

Working with partners on our landscape scale nature conservation vision.

Increasing NWT diversity, engaging with the county's diverse population.

Monitoring progress against the new strategy.

Following the presentation IJ asked if members had any questions on the Annual Report. Charles Cannon thanked the Trust for "bringing the city" to Ransom Wood and said he hoped that the Trust will thank the police force as Paddy Tipping now has rural crime in hand. IJ agreed that Paddy Tipping has had a noticeable effect on wildlife crime and gave his thanks. As there were no questions the Annual Trustees' Report was proposed by Mike Spencer and seconded by Robert Armitage. The meeting AGREED the report by a show of hands.

## **6. Audited Accounts Report for year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019**

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

Copies of the 2018/19 statutory accounts were available to view.

CG said that in his first report three years ago he had explained how the Trust was recovering from a difficult financial situation but since then he had been reporting a steady year on year improvement. That is continuing.

Over the three years to March 2018 we had shown a deficit of £346k, a surplus of £128k (due to some unusually large legacies) and a deficit of £316k. But the 2018/19 deficit is down to £156k. Thanks to the efforts of the Finance Team led by Phil Slocombe we now have tight control over income and expenditure on a daily basis. Monthly reports are made to Trustees to enable critical overview. The Trust now has a budgetary process so early warning signs will show. With this monitoring we delivered a net surplus before depreciation, some way ahead of our budget and we are on the way to delivering a sustainable future.

The Trust still needs to build up its reserves. At critical points in the year cash flow issues still need careful management. But as a result of further action since the end of the accounting year in March the Trust is making excellent progress. Subject of course to unknowns which could always have adverse impact on our hard work.

In the year unrestricted income, money we are able to spend in order to run the business, grew by £137k, while restricted income, money for specific activities, fell by £418k. The Trust sees this as an acceptable mix because it needs above all to be able to concentrate on core activities.

Membership income was in decline but we now have a Supporter Journey Manager, Ruth Grice, who leads a team producing good results; an increase of 48 membership households between April and September this year to 5583. The Trust is pleased to have an excellent membership retention rate of 95.7%; it values its existing members and hopes that this figure shows that they value the Trust too.

We are also dependent on, and grateful for support from, our two subsidiary companies EMEC Ltd and NWT Trading Ltd which gift their profits to the Trust. EMEC's contribution rose from £79k to £84k. The Company has excellent further growth potential. We continue to look to refine the way in which it operates. The Trading company, which operates the centres at Attenborough and Idle Valley has continued its transformation – it is now consistently delivering a decent profit. In 2018/19 Trading gifted £37k to the Trust.

The Trust has stabilised its contingency fund although we need it to be increased beyond its 2019 level to make it easier to ride any cash flow fluctuations. This will hopefully be achievable in the current year.

The Trust has a stronger, more challenging management process in place for any proposed new projects. Thus we can highlight any unrestricted income issues and focus on the financial impact on the Trust and in particular long term sustainability.

CG asked for any questions. There was a comment about how fundraising schemes generating money through websites take a share of the money for their fees. Erin McDaid replied that although they did take some of the money they are an effective platform. However, a new donation platform is being developed with The Wildlife Trusts. There were no other questions.

The Treasurer's report was proposed by Valerie Holt and seconded by Nick Parsons. The meeting AGREED the accounts with a show of hands.

## **7. The Appointment of Auditors**

IJ thanked Ling Phipps (now Haines Watts) and in particular Diane Lockwood for being so helpful during 2018/19.

The re-appointment of Haines Watts as auditors was proposed by Robert Armitage and seconded by Nick Parsons. The meeting AGREED the appointment of Haines Watts as auditors.

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

IJ started by thanking Sir Andrew Buchanan for his support this year. He then asked the meeting to re-elect the current President, Vice-Presidents and a new Vice-President Martyn Poliakoff.

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  
The Vice Chancellor of the University of Nottingham  
Prof. Martyn Poliakoff  
Mike Dilger  
John Holmes  
Paddy Tipping  
Graham Machin  
Rob Lambert

Prof. Martyn Poliakoff told members how he was delighted to be nominated as he and his wife Janet have been visiting Attenborough for more than 40 years. He said it is a wonderful place and he will be delighted to contribute to maximising its opportunities to be an even better place for future generations.

IJ informed members that Kenneth Clarke MP QC who has served as Vice-President for 20 years has stood down.

The nominations were proposed by Nick Parsons and seconded by Colin Gibson. The meeting AGREED the appointments of President and Vice-Presidents by a show of hands.

## **9. Re-election of Trustees and Election of new Trustees**

Three trustees had resigned this year for a variety of reasons, Tim Farr, Rod Jones and Simon Staples(SS). IJ informed members that SS had been a trustee since 2002 including Vice Chairman for eight years and Chair of EMEC. IJ thanked them all.

Three trustees, Colin Gibson, Cally Keetley and David Schwarz, had come to the end of their current 3 year term but were eligible to be re-elected for a second 3 years. Robert Armitage has served for nine years continually, however in 13.3 of our Articles of Association an Officer can extend their trusteeship should Council so wish. Robert will be Honorary Secretary for one year. Two trustees, Shilpa Shah and Ruth Thurgood, had been co-opted on to Council during the year and were thus being put forward for formal election. IJ told members that all six trustees CVs were available to view.

The nominations were proposed by Mike Spencer and seconded by Nick Parsons. The meeting AGREED the re-appointments and appointments.

IJ then introduced the incoming Chairman Nick Parsons saying he is a long serving trustee who has recently retired as a lawyer with Browne-Jacobson where he led 200 lawyers and service staff. He will bring a wealth of commercial and legal skills.

NP said he would like to take this opportunity to gratefully thank IJ for all the work he has done as Chairman over the past five years.

#### **10. Any other competent business**

There was no other business.

At the end of the meeting IJ told members that in the last five years, as for many other organisations, there had been immense changes. The Trust was now ahead of the curve and overall was now stable if not yet quite sustainable financially. The first two to three years were spent resolving financial and governance issues that had come about largely due to lack of trustee scrutiny at a time of great expansion. Trustees and staff had pulled together and greatly strengthened the governance of the Trust. IJ paid tribute to the crucial work of the many volunteers who help us to achieve our core aims. He felt that the Trust is now in good heart and could look forward with ambition. He was delighted to hand over the chair to the immensely capable hands of Nick Parsons and thanked all staff and volunteers, the wonderful group of people that is Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust.

IJ then closed the meeting by thanking members for attending.