



# Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust

## **Minutes of the 60<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting** **held in person at Capital One, Trent House, Station St, Nottingham** **NG2 3HX and online via Zoom at 6.30pm** **on Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2023**

### **Attendance**

26 members attended online and 28 in person.

Paul Wilkinson (PW), the Trust's CEO, welcomed everyone to the 60<sup>th</sup> AGM, taking place during our special anniversary year. PW welcomed the civic guests, Vice-Presidents, Executive Vice-Presidents, members and partners. PW acknowledged this is the first time for a number of years we have been able to meet in person and the first time the AGM has been hybrid, with people in the room and online.

PW thanked our special partner and hosts Capital One. Dave Richards (DR), Capital One Head of Corporate Responsibility joined PW in giving everyone a warm welcome. DR provided an introduction highlighting Capital One's partnership work, volunteering programme and fundraising activities as well as their environmental sustainability journey, with their "green team" who partner with Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust. DR congratulated the Trust on its 60<sup>th</sup> AGM.

PW explained how the Zoom polling function would work online and explained that votes will be recorded with a show of hands in the room, as well as clarifying the hybrid process for proposers and seconders. Members were given a trial run on voting both online and in the room. PW said any questions were welcomed throughout the meeting and any that couldn't be answered would be taken to the next Council meeting in December.

### **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 Tom Huggon and seconded by Martin Willis.

### **2. Apologies for absence**

Apologies from President Sir Andrew Buchanan and Vice Presidents, the Lord Mayor of Nottingham, Mayor of Gedling, Chair of Bassetlaw, Vice Chancellor of Nottingham Trent University, Professor Edward Peck CBE, Paddy Tipping and apologies from members Judith Milnes, Andrew Hindmarsh, Sue Leach and Shirley Hatcher of Newark Local Group Committee (who have a local talk this evening), Councillor Dr Phil Barron from Southwell Town Council, Graham Osborn and Mark Hyde.

### **3. Approval of minutes of the 59<sup>th</sup> AGM**

The minutes of the 59<sup>th</sup> AGM held on Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2022 were proposed by Katherine Wilson and seconded by Martin Willis. NP asked if there were any questions

from the minutes. There were none. By poll vote majority the meeting AGREED the minutes as a true and accurate record.

#### **4. Annual Trustees' Report for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023**

A presentation with highlights of the year from the Annual Trustees' Report was given by the Chair. These points should be read in conjunction with viewing the presentation slides. The Trust's three 2030 strategies were shared:

- 1) to persuade 1 in 4 (275,000 people) in the county to take action for nature
- 2) to ensure 30% of our county's land is managed with wildlife in mind (which is 65,000 hectares with 18,000 hectares currently in the ownership of sympathetic management)
- 3) To ensure we are valued and that our structure is secure, relevant and resilient

NP discussed the importance of campaigning, highlighting Keeping it Wild's support for the petition calling for more ambitious nature targets that was taken to Downing Street; the collective strategy of working with other NGO's to help pursue targets with a combined membership of £8 million and the fantastic work of Wild-NG on the poison free pavements campaign and swift homecoming parade.

NP paid tribute to the 10,000 members, volunteers and local groups who do fantastic work, highlighting several examples including the re-establishment of face to face talks, reserve events and the transformation of the garden at Attenborough Nature Reserve.

NP shared positive news on the reintroduction of beavers, which continues with more kits being born, along with the continuation of successful partnerships with Severn Trent, the work with Peatland restoration and the "Green Heart" project as part of the Broadmarsh regeneration with input from EMEC Ecology.

NP discussed the importance of good relationships with businesses. There is a growing concern for social value and environmental impact which provides an opportunity for support and investment. We are also working the Derbyshire Wildlife Trust to raise awareness on the value of nature ahead of the new combined authority Mayoral election in May.

NP acknowledged some of the setbacks from the year, Defra funding ceased from the badger vaccination scheme and the impact avian flu had on the business. The teams work on Bird Flu at Attenborough, however helped develop new national guidance on how to deal with outbreaks, particular on accessible and well visited reserves. It has been a challenging couple of years for the economy with challenges faced in the Trading and EMEC subsidiaries. Our target is to reduce our structural deficit as part of the "Thriving Together" strategy to build our resilience. NP said we are grateful for our members, donors and business who continue to grow and provide support.

NP highlighted some new projects: Attenborough for All, Water Vole Recovery Project, Wilder Nottinghamshire Network as well as the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations in May with the continued work for the future of the Trust.

NP thanked the four trustees who were stepping down after sharing over 40 years of service between them:- Robert Armitage, Ruth Thurgood, Mike Spencer and Martin Wilis for their support as Trustees and their work on Committees.

NP closed the presentation by stating it had been a tough year financially but a very successful year too. We are very ambitious for wildlife, we're not daunted, we are moving forward. NP thanked everyone for their support this year.

NP asked if members had any questions. NP said a previously submitted question from Beeston Wildlife Group (BWG) on financials would be answered later in the meeting.

There was one question asked, about how we measure the "1 in 4 people taking action for nature" and how are we doing? NP replied that RSWT is looking at definitions and measurements. There is a pathway from small steps, people can take from volunteering to forming groups and taking action. We're doing well, a lot of groundwork needs to be done to get the message out there, so people know they are being asked to "*take action for nature*".

The Annual Trustees' Report was proposed by Gordon Dyne and seconded John Holmes. The meeting AGREED the report by a vote poll majority.

## **5. Accounts for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023 (inc appointment of auditors)**

The Honorary Treasurer, Colin Gibson (CG) presented the accounts. These points are in addition to his presentation slides.

CG started by referencing the statutory consolidated accounts which were included with the on-line documentation prior to the AGM. He hoped people had an opportunity to review them, particularly the Chair and Trustee reports which provide more detail.

Last year CG cautioned that after a couple of very good years for the Trust, 2023 would be difficult and it was, resulting in a £683k deficit. Reasons for this were:

- The restructure of EMEC in 2023 and therefore it's reduced delivery (after 2 substantial years)
- Bird flu, post covid recovery and financial problems of the wider economy impacting on Trading

The total income charts show £4.1million last year, £4.9million the year before. Donations and legacies fell by £150k, to £770k. Parking at Attenborough moved from donations to compulsory, part way through 2021-2022. This is now recorded in the Trading company figures. Income in gifts in wills varies widely and it can take a while to receive, which was £160k in 2022/23. This is a valuable source of one off income and we are very thankful for these donations but it cannot be forecast.

Membership income grew from £432k to £493k in the year. This is one of the highest in the movement and credit goes to our fundraising team and the central team for helping our membership continue to grow.

Within expenditure, the rejuvenation fund was referenced at the last AGM, with £250k from EMEC'S profit with purpose going towards repair and restoration of assets, work at reserves and TORS, fencing, new machinery and invested in the Trading Company.

CG touched on the pension deficit and £99k provision in the accounts, which is a complex issue, not just affecting us and the source of legal activity with RSWT.

In reference to the Structural deficit, the key focus on this is "thriving together" which requires the Trust to be strong and stable and the figure of £305k needs to be turned around, with a target of 2024/2025 set to meet this.

CG talked through the cash position slides and the target of having 3 months of payroll cover and working capital.

Looking ahead, CG is optimistic that we are making significant progress, there is still a lot to be done, there will be obstacles and ongoing uncertainty but CG is hopeful that we are moving in the right direction. The future aim is to eliminate the deficit in financial terms whilst balancing ambition for the commercial subsidiaries, EMEC and Trading. Focusing on asset management, cases of support within fundraising, people & culture and improving the supply chain and working with other Trusts. CG praised the volunteers and our members as they equate to our 4<sup>th</sup> income stream and close to being 3<sup>rd</sup>, as a key to helping us remove the structural deficit. EMEC has been transformed with 3 client contracts of £1million each, leading other ecological consultants and project management. Trading had a slower start in terms of profit but has big potential.

CG concluded by paying tribute to the Finance team and Phil Slocombe (PS) the Head of Business Support and Development and auditors from Haines Watts for their help with the transfer to a new finance computer system. There will be more on this next year.

CG asked for any questions.

There was a question in the room regarding note 7, about the subsidiary company costs and raising funds. The subsidiaries are separated out for income but why are they not separated out in expenditure?

PS said the format of the statutory accounts is prescribed by the auditors. The VAT purpose have separate accounts and break down the separate lines of business and cost within EMEC and Trading. There are other notes around the subsidiaries towards the end of the report too detailing the profit with purpose that was delivered, which may be clearer than note 7. PS is going to ask the auditors if we can make this information clearer in future.

PW then introduced a question that had been previously submitted by Beeston Wildlife Group (BWG). PW said at the last AGM, BWG asked about plans for the funds raised for Attenborough Lifeline Appeal, which ran from early 2019 into 2020, to raise funds to buy and maintain Attenborough Nature Reserve. PW said after taking out all the costs for buying the Nature reserve, we were left with a sum of around £400k. The question BWG submitted had 3 parts:-

1. Are the plans ready yet about what we're going to do with the Nature Reserve?
2. Have the Attenborough Lifeline Appeal funds been spent?
3. Does NWT still have funds to achieve the goals set out in the Vision?

PW addressed the points as one as they are all connected. PW stated the site was purchased at the end of 2020 from CEMEX and the following year we published our vision on which we are making good progress. The vision was:

- To make the site even better for wildlife
- To help more people connect to nature
- To think of Attenborough as a living laboratory to help connect people to big global issues and what was happening locally

The Nature Recovery team are also delivering on the Attenborough management plan, work identified prior to purchasing the site and working with University of Nottingham on

an eDNA project as part of our research hub focus. Subsequently the Attenborough for All project funded through National Lottery Heritage Fund has begun led by new project manager Helen Griffiths. We also introduced six new areas onsite into Stewardship schemes, with partial funding from the government supplemented by the Trust, we have also delivered extra fencing for grazing and scrub habitat for warblers. We've also developed the Water Vole Recovery Project and have submitted an application for a Species Survival bid for £1 million.

The Attenborough Lifeline Appeal funds have been spent on Attenborough over the last 2/3 years, for wildlife and habitats on the site and to support our delivery, staff and ongoing maintenance and use of the site. The funds have been a huge kickstart to delivering the ambitious vision and a great boost as described, including helping with the Avian flu costs of £20K. PW said we remain ambitious to deliver our vision and more in the future.

Nigel Slater (NS), the Vice Chairman of BWG, said he didn't feel their questions had been answered. PW answered each of questions separately:

1. Are the plans ready yet about what we're going to do with the Nature Reserve? Yes
2. Have the Attenborough Lifeline Appeal funds been spent? Yes
3. Does NWT still have funds to achieve the goals set out in the Vision? Yes and we have applied for lots more.

NS asked how much exactly was raised, beyond the amount to buy the reserve from people's donations.

PW said the figure was around £400k. PW said we've worked on Attenborough for 60 years, and it's an important site that saw the creation of the Trust. The £400k was an amazing amount of money but it was never going to last forever. We have always been clear that it was to help to purchase the site, and it's on-going future maintenance and security.

NS disagreed referencing his document that said it was for habitat and species, not to go into a pot for the things going wrong in the future, this is why people donated the money. NS asked whether the money was ring fenced and felt if not it should have been.

PW said it wasn't but we have always said the money raised would be for meeting the ambitions for Attenborough and that is what it has been spent on, habitat and species is part of that.

NS remained unhappy that the funds were used for other purposes and believed people may be entitled to ask for their money back.

Sir Martyn Poliakoff intervened to say clearly there was a disagreement and suggested it was continued in private later as it didn't involve most of the audience. He said as a donor to the appeal he felt the money was used in the way he would have wanted. Sir Martyn felt the money had all been used to make Attenborough a better place, which in the end is what all our members want.

PW very happy to have a follow up conversation with BWG to continue the discussion.

The Treasurer's report was proposed by Gordon Dyne and seconded by Martin Willis. The meeting AGREED the accounts with a poll vote majority.

A slide was shown to members confirming Haines Watts willingness to be reappointed as auditors. The re-appointment was proposed by John Holmes and seconded by Katherine

Wilson. The meeting AGREED the appointment of Haines Watts as auditors with a poll vote majority.

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

NP drew attention to the nominations for President and Vice Presidents listed on the slide. He then asked the meeting to re-elect the current President, Vice-Presidents and informed the AGM that Sir Andrew Buchanan would be stepping down at the end of this year and thanked him for his support.

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

The nominations were proposed by Tom Huggon and seconded by Steve Clifton. The meeting AGREED the appointments of President and Vice-Presidents with a poll vote majority.

NP read out 1 nomination for a trustee to be re-elected onto Council, Steve Clifton for a second three-year term.

NP read out the nominations for new Trustees and Youth Trustees standing for election: Ruben Borsje, Alex Flint, Billy Howard, Mark Hyde, Lauren Moore and Graham Osborne.

The Trustee nominations were proposed by Martin Willis and seconded by Tom Huggon.

The meeting AGREED the re-appointment and appointments of trustees and Youth Trustees with a poll vote majority.

## **7. Any other competent business**

A question was raised by Keeping it Wild members, aged 13 to 25, via Youth Trustee Kat Hart and read out by PW.

“Given that the ability to raise questions and vote at the AGM is restricted to Members - and members have to be over 16 – how does the Trust ensure that the views of young people are taken into account in decision making?”

PW said the question underlines the maturity and determination of the young people we are fortunate enough to have as part of our organisation. We've invested heavily in our youth programmes, including Keeping it Wild & Young Rangers and we were amongst the first Wildlife Trusts to appoint Youth Trustees. Keeping it Wild Members have been consulted on an ad hoc basis on a range of issues including campaigns and we're keen to develop other ways, whether formal or informal, where young people can have an input to decisions and the future direction of the Trust.

PW agreed to committing to work with KIW to find an answer to their question and to ensure that triggers a wider discussion – steered by our People & Nature Committee and chair Emma Sherburn – and that Keeping It Wild members and other young supporters are part of the discussion. Keeping it Wild are also in touch with a range of other groups of young people – so we're keen to ensure that the Trust can learn from these collaborations and networks too.

At the end of the meeting PW shared a video celebrating the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust. PW said the video gave a flavour of the 60<sup>th</sup> year platform for people to express their aspirations for the future, their thoughts around the Trust, broadening conservation and building a wilder Nottinghamshire network, to inspire more people to take action.

PW asked everyone to join us in celebrating our 60<sup>th</sup> year and looking ahead to hopefully another 60 years!

NP thanked everyone for their attendance in person and online and for Capital One for hosting.

Meeting closed approximately 7.30pm