



NORFOLK WILDLIFE TRUST

Minutes of the Trust's 93rd Annual General Meeting Thursday 19th November, 6pm Online via Zoom

Present: Bill Jordan (President)
Alice Liddle (Chair)
Lyndsay Whiteman (Treasurer)
67 Trustees, Members and Staff

In Attendance: Pamela Abbott (Chief Executive Officer)
Marion Riches (Governance Officer)

The President welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending the Trust's 93rd AGM

FORMAL BUSINESS

Resolution 1

To receive the Report of Council and approve the Report and Audited Financial Statements for the year ending 31 March 2020.

The Treasurer presented a summary of the year's results

Proposed by: Greg Beeton
Seconded by: Scott Pinching

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: Greg Beeton
Seconded by: Scott Pinching

Resolution 2: Approved

Resolutions 3, 4 and 5

To elect/re-elect members of Council:

Resolution 3 – Ben Garrod

Proposed by: Sue Roe
Seconded by: Heather Tyrrell

Resolution 3: Approved

Resolution 4 – Jeff Price

Proposed by: Sue Roe
Seconded by: Heather Tyrrell

Resolution 4: Approved

Resolution 5 – John Sharpe
Proposed by: Sue Roe
Seconded by: Heather Tyrrell
Resolution 5: Approved

The Chair thanked Heather Tyrrell, outgoing Trustee, for her contribution to the Board over the last three years.

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

INFORMAL BUSINESS

1. The President gave his address, which was filmed at Pensthorpe Natural park: a condensed transcript is given below:

“You will have received a copy of the 2019-2020 Annual Report which gives a good account of the conservation work that has taken place not just on nearly 2,500 of NWT reserves, but also on other projects where we have been involved.

Let’s begin with a ground breaking scheme to increase numbers of Pool Frogs from Thompson Common where “head starting” was employed to protect spawn from early predators. The young frogs were later released in ancient restored ponds on the same site. We have been working with Amphibian and Reptile Conservation on pool frog reintroduction since 2015 and it is quite amazing to see the project in its next phase, one that will be furthered by our acquisition of land adjoining Thompson Common next May if our appeal is successful. I can at this point announce that our original target of £250,000, which dates back to March 2020, has led to £100,000 being raised.

It was an excellent year too for natterjack toads at Holme Dunes as well as Syderstone Common. Holme alone saw 10-15,000 toadlets from its main pools.

At Cley and Salthouse Marshes the numbers of ground nesting birds were, once again, good with healthy numbers of lapwings and avocets.

Memorably a pair of Little Ringed Plover hatched four chicks in the visitor centre car park and bittern were also heard booming – the first time since 2010.

At Foxley Wood Purple Emperor Butterflies were confirmed as on site – the first time since the 1970s, and nearly 50 years since the species was declared extinct in Norfolk.

Our acquisition in May 2020 of land known as the Foxley Enclave is 5.2 hectares of arable land, bordered on three sides by our largest ancient woodland in Norfolk, some 124 hectares, that is now in our ownership through a major donation. We have not shared this news publically so it is wonderful to share it with you first and celebrate land that will be restored making further space for such rare species.

Those of you who attended the AGM last year will remember the presentation from Martin Perrow who explained the science behind bio-manipulation and its application at Ranworth and Barton Broad. Known as the “Tipping the Balance” project, the aim here is to reduce over nutrification and algae bloom, caused by industry and agricultural run-off which in turn have starved rare plants of the conditions they need. By creating bio manipulation zones and removing fish species that were affecting water quality and biodiversity, we were able to that allow the water to clear and rare water plants to return. This is another fantastic and technically complex project that has resulted in bays being crystal clear and the edges of the broads being cleared to encourage greater plant diversity. The clear water will attract large

flocks of winter wildfowl, as they would have done in Victorian times. Looking forward we know this is an important contribution to improving the water quality of the Bure and Ant Valleys and establishing vital aquatic plant beds.

What we do to save wildlife must exist in the wider landscape and we need to work in partnership to establish a Nature Recovery Network for Norfolk. The concept of this network is a key component of Government's 25-year Environment Plan. We at the Trust already have a longstanding commitment to conservation across Norfolk not just our nature reserves. Our Living Landscapes are a reflection of this and have been for several years.

If we are going to be successful in tackling the threats of global warming, further building development and continued loss of habitat for wildlife we do need to draw more supporters into the network and ensure we expand conservation activities beyond our reserve base.

Already our existing partners work with us to cover the care of churchyards, roadside verges, village ponds and County Wildlife Sites. We also work to expand the network of landowners and farms that are committed to conservation.

I feel strongly that our aim as Norfolk's pre-eminent wildlife body must be to encourage more supporters from all age groups to get behind this invaluable work. You already support us and for that I thank you."

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

"Thank you, Bill. You have shown us some examples of the effective and exciting projects and opportunities over 2019/20 that demonstrate Norfolk Wildlife Trust's ability to deliver its conservation work, work that will continue despite these current difficult times. But Norfolk Wildlife Trust couldn't do it without support. So a big thank you to all our members; to the dedicated staff of Norfolk Wildlife Trust; to the Local Groups; to our donors, funders, grant providers, investors and supporters; to our ambassadors; and last but by no means least to our volunteers.

Our volunteers contribute about 30% of the extra work that the Trust achieves. The year to March 2020 saw a record in volunteer terms: about 1,500 volunteer activities contributed to Norfolk Wildlife Trust's work over the year, giving a collective of at least 55,000 hours. That translates to 7,850 volunteer days, the same number as 33 full-time equivalent members of staff would contribute. We recruited 102 new volunteers in 2019 across 14 different volunteer roles (including new roles) ranging from volunteers at our visitor centres, guides, walk leaders, those engaged in work parties on reserves, livestock checkers and wildlife surveyors.

Volunteers – as well as others – were also crucial in the resounding success of the Wildlife in Common project. Indeed, our outgoing trustee, Heather Tyrrell, was one such volunteer. Wildlife in Common was a community-led project over the two years leading up to 2020 run in conjunction with the University of East Anglia and Norfolk County Council – and supported widely by various organisations. Its aim was to reconnect people with their commons, celebrate the importance of Norfolk's common land and inform community-led solutions to improve commons for both wildlife and people. The project recognised the need to value commons for their wildlife and landscape qualities but did more than that...it set out to enhance people's ability to walk freely locally, to encounter nature and find a restorative place (all of which have proved so vital in these times of pandemic). Over 200 people were trained in researching historic landscape features and training in new surveying skills was deployed with the result that 69 commons were surveyed by over 180 volunteers and involving something in excess of 3,500 hours of surveying. People were brought together in over 39 events including celebrations which were attended by some 1,500 people.

The Covid crisis has highlighted how vital it is to many people to have green spaces to spend time in and how beneficial it can be if nature is part of their everyday lives, helping to reduce stress and anxiety. We know from the many stories, photos and activity on social media that many people in Norfolk have during this crisis found comfort and positivity when out and about in the natural world or doing something to work for the benefit of wildlife. Norfolk Wildlife Trust recognises how crucial it is to continue to facilitate such wildlife journeys and to ensure that everyone has the ability to access the benefits of wildlife and nature. So, with your continued support Norfolk Wildlife Trust will continue this vital work.

Both Bill and I have looked back at some of the highlights of the past year in terms of projects, land and people. I am delighted to invite the Trust's Chief Executive, Pamela Abbott, to take over now and talk about the future".

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

"Thank you Alice and Bill. Sir John Lawton led a review called 'Making Space for Nature' in 2010 that, which outlined that in order to have a local response to improving nature we should have more, bigger, better and more joined up habitats. The Trust's response has been to collaborate with land owners across the wider landscape of Norfolk. We are very excited to be expert advisors to the Wendling Beck partnership of three landowners which join together three of our very special sites one of which we acquired this year – Beetley Meadows together with Scarning and Hoe Rough. We are also collaborating with Norfolk and Suffolk County Council and have produced a compendium of natural assets in Norfolk. This shows we have 45% of England's reedbeds in Norfolk and Suffolk and Norfolk alone has 17% of lowland fens.

Last week a new report established that if we have 30% of land managed for nature we could reduce the extinction of 9 out of 10 threatened species.

It was a super year for biodiversity locally: the purple emperors that came for the first time to Foxley Wood last year returned to and expanded their distribution, the marsh club moss was rediscovered at Holt Lows and the numbers of Swallowtail were at their highest on record at Alderfen. Looking into the future we are building bigger and better for biodiversity.

We are very grateful for all your support."

4. Presentation of the Sydney Long Medal 2020:

A short film was shown where Dr Tony Leech was awarded the Sydney Long Medal for 2020 for his outstanding contribution to natural history and conservation in Norfolk.

The President added his congratulations to Tony for such a well-deserved award and his huge contribution to natural history and conservation in Norfolk.

5. A number of questions were submitted in advance of the meeting and were answered by the Chair and the Chief Executive:

Three questions relating to the Trustee Board of Norfolk Wildlife Trust were received

Answer: After tonight's resolutions and with Heather Tyrrell standing down, we currently have 9 Trustees plus our Treasurer and 2 student observers. Our Memorandum & Articles of Association state that we should have up to a maximum of 12 Trustees, plus a Treasurer and no more than two co-opted members. One of those voted onto the Board this evening, Ben Garrod, had been co-opted last December, meaning we currently do not have any co-opted members but are always looking for interested members to join our Board, either co-opted or as full Trustees. The Board took the decision earlier this year not to actively recruit further Trustees in 2020 due to the Covid-19 situation as it would have been difficult to go through our normal recruitment and induction processes but we hope that 2021 will allow us to resume our search for interested parties, who will contribute to the good governance of Norfolk Wildlife Trust.

An indication of the current impact of the corona virus pandemic on the work of the Trust - financial, reserves management and other work was requested

Answer: It was noted that the Treasurer covered the finance element in her earlier presentation. In relation to our reserves, there was a minimal impact on our habitat management because we were able to put in place COVID 19 secure working practices. It did however affect our grazing regime as we needed to reduce stock movements and therefore weren't able to carry out all of our planned mosaic of grazing habitat management. Our face to face education and engagement programmes were halted and where we could we moved events online and created activity booklets for adults and children at home. Of course, our visitor centres were closed for both of the full lockdown periods and then opened with a limited offer to visitors as permitted under the regulations at the time. Our local groups who are at the heart of our community activities across Norfolk have paused all of their activities for the time being. As an organisation, a key priority has been to retain our skilled and experienced staff so that we can resume all of our activities that we know our members and visitors appreciate as we emerge from the pandemic.

A question was asked in relation to objection to the Western Link Road and whether the Trust would continue to take stance on future projects that adversely affect species and habitats.

Answer: We will always stand up for nature and for threatened species and habitats and use our convening power, expertise and advocacy to do so.

How will concepts like Biodiversity Net Gain be best coordinated in Norfolk?

Answer: We are exploring how concepts like Biodiversity Net Gain and Nature Based Solutions such as natural flood management and wetland restoration fit with a suite of actions which could support the restoration of habitats, mitigate climate change and safeguard nature across the county. We are part of a very broad collaboration led by Norfolk and Suffolk county councils, which has brought together evidence of where habitats and species of particular uniqueness and importance are located throughout the two counties to aid any planning for restoration or conservation in the future. In addition, we are part of an expert advisory group on one of only 9 Defra Biodiversity Net Gain pilots in the country working out how Biodiversity Net Gain might work on the ground. We routinely raise the need to include Biodiversity Net Gain in all new developments, as part of our response to planning applications, in anticipation of its inclusion in the Environment Act

I live near Loddon and there are no activities south of the river Yare. 95% of activities are at Cley - could there be more in other areas of Norfolk

Answer: Yes, our activities do tend to focus on our key reserves where we have the infrastructure - Cley and more recently Hickling. However, we have a variety of activities and we put on and take part in events across the county. We have workshops and roadshows via projects such as Wildlife in Common and our local group activities. We would like to do more in the south of the county and we are developing a project for the Claylands including community engagement. We also hope that we can get "Cley Calling Presents" performances and talks available more widely in the county. These are currently digital of course.

Should costs/prices for school groups be reduced or nominal?

Answer: NWT keeps its prices to schools at a minimum (direct staff time and transport) and we offer a range of options including outreach and self-guided learning to give schools choice to suit their budgets. Where possible we always seek grants and sponsorship to fund school visits including their travel and outreach to schools & we are successful in doing this which is great for schools.

The annual report is hard to read printed on dark green and mauve pages. The white pages are easy to read.

Answer: We do strive to be as accessible as possible and this year had put a few new measures in place compared to previous editions, such as making the font larger and using more black text on white backgrounds where we could. We do try to maximise the space we can give to fantastic photos of the wildlife and places we are talking about, but it does have certain design limitations, meaning we need to put text over the image in many places. The shortened version aims to represent the year in brief, combining an account of what has been achieved with images of the species. Whereas the full NWT Annual Report is a black and white document which also includes the complete accounts is available on our website. I will take your concerns to our next editorial meeting though, as we do want to continually improve our communications.

The President thanked everyone for attending the AGM, wishing them all a good evening.

The Chair invited members to join the Cley Calling Presents event by guest speaker, Brigit Strawbridge Howard, entitled 'Dancing with Bees: A Journey Back to Nature'