NORFOLK WILDLIFE TRUST

Minutes of the Trust's 99th Annual General Meeting
Saturday 7th November 2026, 1.35pm

Present:	Patrick Barkham (President) Matthew Bradbury (Chair) Richard Carter (Treasurer) 94 Vice-Presidents, Trustees, Members and Staff
In Attendance:	Eliot Lyne (Chief Executive Officer) Marion Riches (Governance Officer)

The President welcomed everyone in attendance both in person and online and thanked them for attending the Trust's 99th AGM in this centenary year.

FORMAL BUSINESS

Resolution 1
To confirm the minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 6 November 2025
Resolution 1: Approved

Resolution 2
To receive the Report of Council and approve the Report and audited Financial Statements for the year ending 31 March 2026.

The Treasurer presented a summary of the year's results
Resolution 2: Approved

Resolution 3
To re-appoint Lovewell Blake as the Trust's auditors and authorise Council to determine their remuneration.
Resolution 3: Approved

Resolution 4
To re-elect/elect members of Council of Trustees

Results
Re-elected:
Kathy Gill – 1,246 votes
Mandy Loadman –1,221 votes

Elected:
Catherine Docherty – 1,232 votes
Naomi Palmer – 1,222 votes

The President congratulated all those elected to Council

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

INFORMAL BUSINESS

1. **The Chair, Matthew Bradbury, gave his address; a condensed transcript is given below:**

"I welcome members attending in person and online to my first AGM address as Chair. As a former member of the Trust's staff, returning in a governance role has particular significance for me. Today I review the year 2025–26, draw out highlights from the annual report and celebrate our centenary, while emphasising the organisational foundations supporting our conservation work.

Membership is approaching 42,000, and more than 1,700 volunteers have contributed over 43,000 hours. These figures remind us that our achievements depend on a substantial community of support. Centenary highlights include Patrick Barkham's London Marathon fundraising in a badger costume, which has raised over £8,000, and the nesting and fledging of osprey chicks at Ranworth. The latter illustrates the progress we have made from earlier aspirations to create suitable nesting opportunities.

Norfolk Wildlife Trust is part of the wider Wildlife Trust movement. At a federation-wide Town Hall event, our team made a centenary contribution, sharing our work and reflecting on what has been achieved over a hundred years. There is value of aligned strategic objectives across the movement and our collective capacity to influence policy, campaign and support nature recovery.

Governance is another central theme. We have established operating structures and continue to develop our systems of leadership, decision-making and oversight. Accountability to members and other stakeholders is fundamental. I acknowledge Glenn and Marion for their involvement in the governance-improvement work, including attention to trustee training. This is part of maintaining the organisational capacity we need to support ambitious conservation decisions.

I turn now to several land acquisitions and access projects. These include a 25-hectare nature-rich site of Sotshole Broad, and more than 43 hectares at Hickling Peck Marshes adjoining our existing holding, where water-level management will support wildlife. Broadland Country Park, developed through partnership with Broadland District Council, is intended to provide an attractive destination for visitors while relieving pressure on more sensitive heathland sites. The Walker Rubber site beside Sweetbriar Marshes will enable improved accessibility, including car and coach parking and access for school and other groups.

Wood Norton represents a further opportunity for us to create an ecologically rich, resilient landscape benefiting wildlife, water and people. I highlight the nutrient-credit funding approach and our ambition to make the site a hub for wider nature recovery. Our work through Wilder Norwich, Wilder Hickling and Nature City Norwich emphasises urban nature and engagement with people who may find it difficult to reach the countryside. Funding has been secured for the development phase of Wilder Hickling, while Nature City Norwich has succeeded in a competitive funding process.

Our Youth Board is part of our progress towards broader participation. Two representatives attended a recent Council meeting.

I end with acknowledgements. John Sharpe is stepping down after nine years as a Trustee and service as Vice-Chair, and I thank my predecessor Alice for supporting the transition. I want to thank the contribution of our President, Chief Executive, Trustees, staff, volunteers, members, donors, funders and event-support teams. I want to give particular acknowledgement to Marion's forthcoming departure and thank her for organising 16 AGMs.

Our centenary celebrates both our conservation achievements and the people and structures that make them possible."

2. The Chair of Trustees handed over to Eliot Lyne, CEO, to give his address, of which a condensed transcript is given below:

"One of our centenary themes as we look forwards to the next 100 years is hope.
My theme for today is that hope is an active commitment, rather than a passive observation. As we look forwards to the future, we need to be real in that there are a significant number of threats to nature which will impact our ability to deliver. Firstly, our economic system still prioritises funding nature loss over nature recovery. A recent 2026 report from the UN Environment Programme shows that annual funding for nature depleting activities is 30 times greater than funding for nature recovering activities. It's a sobering reminder of the way our financial system currently works.

Secondly, climate change is here. We are in the midst of a climate and ecological emergency. This is no longer an abstract future threat: we are already seeing the effects in extreme weather, declining biodiversity and the erosion of the natural systems that support our health, food, water and wellbeing. This question is striking: was that the warmest summer on record, or the coolest summer for the rest of our lives?

Thirdly, water is becoming a particularly challenging issue in the East of England. The condition of many of our rivers, wetlands, aquifers and coastal waters continues to decline. Public frustration is growing. Trust in the water system is low. Climate change is making things worse, with simultaneously increased risk from drought and flooding.
Projected water shortages in 2050 in the East of England are 769m litres PER DAY. Water for nature will not be top of the political list so we have to start fighting now to renaturalise our entire water system.

The toxic cocktail of political instability, amplified by social media, cost of living pressures and fundamental systemic economic imbalances will lead to ever increasing societal uncertainty. Volatility is the new normal, as much as it pains me to say that. We can't bury our heads in the sand and pretend otherwise.

But (and here's the good bit) nature has the answers to all that. These are verifiable facts:

- Nature is good for our health and wellbeing
- Nature's recovery can lead to greater food security and more stable costs to consumers
- A healthy natural environment means having cleaner air
- Nature helps turn the heat down on a warming planet
- Nature cleans the water you drink, cutting reliance on artificial treatment
- Working with nature will help limit the risks of your home being flooded
- Nature is a self-sustaining wealth generator, not a cost to be managed

So how do we unleash the power of nature to address those threats. We need to lean in to the **actions related to hope**!

It is less about what we do, and more about who we are. In a perma-volatile world, the long-term business plan can quickly get blown out of the water.

Collaboration. Courage. Influence. Creating possibility. All actions that will support our agility and resilience.

We cannot hope to bend the curve on nature's recovery on our own. We must work with and through others. We must be humble. Find the common ground. Focus on the things that we agree on, rather than the things we disagree on.

We will need to take more risk. Our founders took a leap of faith in the purchase of Cley Marshes in 1926. Just as we did with the purchase of Wood Norton in our largest ever financial purchase in 2026.

We will need to raise our voice more. As the threats change and grow (think hyper-scale data centres). We will need to adapt and speak out. We took a risk and did this with the Norwich Western Link. Not everyone agreed. But the battle was won. And the damage was averted.

We are currently doing this with the first Environmental Delivery Plan from the Planning and Infrastructure Act.
A key part of staying in a place of hope will require us to constantly create a sense of possibility for us and our supporters.
Our membership has risen from 900 members in 1962 and increased steadily until around 2010 and then flatlined for around 10 years. I'm delighted that since Covid we have bucked the trend and seen a steady increase in members to almost 42,000 today. Not only that, many more members have increased donations above the minimum rate. Currently our average new joiner rate is just over £6 per month, up around 50% from around £4 in 2022.
All of this creates hope that people believe in our cause and trust us to deliver it.
Also you will have seen that the Wildlife Trusts completed the £30m purchase of the Rothbury Estate last week. A barely believable dream. This is one of the largest land purchases in recent history and over 25,000 donors believed in the possibility that this represents.

So to put all of this into action. We need a new kind of leadership. Formal, political leadership is failing. Despite nature being really popular. Politicians continue to believe that it is a blocker to growth.

So my friends we come back to hope. We've talked about leadership, courage, collaboration, voice. But above all, we need to act.
And this final few words exemplifies that.
100 years of hope looks to our future. Our collective future together.
Thank you for being on that journey with us, and we look forward to your continued support as we step up the stairs towards our next 100 years of Hope."

3. **The CEO handed over to the President, Patrick Barkham, to give his address, of which a condensed transcript is given below:**

*"*It is a great honour to stand here in the 100th anniversary year of Norfolk Wildlife Trust, in Cley, where our efforts to protect our county's precious and life-giving wildlife began.
We've had an amazing centenary year.

All of us here are probably familiar with the prescient vision of our founding father, Dr Sydney Long, who resolved to protect Cley Marshes for its wildlife, for ever.
Looking back, there are two things that strike me about our history, which I think we must take forwards into the next century.

The first thing that strikes me is that, at the time, the purchase and creation of many of our nature reserves were big, bold and risky moves.

To give you one example, it was a daring idea in the late 1990s to buy a pretty lifeless 100-acre conifer plantation, Grimston Warren, and attempting to restore it to heathland. No-one was certain it would work. It was only possible with a generous bequest by Muriel Hallet. Thankfully, former west Norfolk warden Bill Boyd's bold idea has been a triumph, and the reserve has almost trebled in size since then.

It was a similar story of creative risk-taking when former chief executive Brendan Joyce convinced Suffolk & Essex Water to fund reedbed creation for a vast extension of Hickling. And it's happened again in our centenary year when Eliot Lyne aided by his senior leadership team, and supported by the trustees, masterminded the audacious purchase of our new 336-acre restoration project at Wood Norton. It was a backs-to-the-wall, race-against-time effort to secure crucial nutrient neutrality funding days just when the government was slamming the funding door shut.

The second thing that strikes me looking back at our history is this: when it comes to creating nature reserves, there is no such thing as buyers' remorse. Has anyone ever thought, 'Oh I wish we hadn't bought Hickling!' Or, 'Why on earth did we purchase Ashwellthorpe or Upton Fen or Holme Dunes?' No! Our nature reserves have usually become more biodiverse over time but, perhaps more importantly, they've become much more precious to all of us, and everyone in Norfolk, as we've come to visit them, know them and love them.

I'd like to share another story where risk-taking triumphed: this Tuesday, when 40 primary school children were hosted at Foxley Wood on a day of bitter winds and driving rain-storms by our brilliant education and reserves teams.

We traipsed through the old wood, which was looking amazing, and then stepped onto our new land to the north, which has increased Norfolk's largest ancient woodland by more than a third. As we walked into the ferocious wind, a roe deer streaked past us. Waiting for us on the far side was a new fenced enclosure, spades, dibbers and 80 young trees, all from Foxley seeds, and hundreds more nuts and seeds.

The children got to work. It was cold, the rain came in, and digging in the heavy clay soil was really tough. But the children never flagged, for more than an hour, putting oaks into the ground (which Coltishall primary kids and me had grown from acorns I collected last autumn). They also planted sallows, field maples, hawthorns, ashes and hazels grown by the Foxley reserves team. They got dibbers and jumped on them and popped hazel nuts and dogwood berries and gelder rose berries into the holes. We are all fans of natural regeneration, and giving nature free reign, but this carefully planned, selective planting on this depleted field will speed up nature's restoration.

It is said that society grows great when old people plant trees in whose shade they will never sit. But these children WILL sit in the shade of their trees.
I asked one thing of them: please come back and see how your tree is doing. Next year. Or in 2100, when you are in your eighties, and then you can show "your" tree to your grandchildren.

"Ah, but how will we know which one is our tree?" asked Betty, a very sharp eight-year-old.
"You're young and you have excellent memories, you'll remember," I told them. "But when you're eighty, you can probably point to the biggest, finest tree, and say 'I planted that,' and everyone will believe you."

This tree-planting was only possible thanks to the generosity of our community. This community of NWT. The incredible donor, Trish, who made it possible for us to buy the land. The amazing donors, Nigel and Daniel, who paid for the buses so the schools could visit. The education team who led the day. The reserves team who provided so many trees and seeds; the volunteers who grew the oaks.

Planting some trees is only one small act. But planting trees with children is a really significant small act. It may change the course of whole lives.

All of these children will remember the day of deer and rainbows and cold winds and planting trees. Many of them will have a switch flicked in their minds. One or two may work for us, or volunteer for us, or go out into the world beyond Norfolk and take action for nature and our precious planet.

We can be inspired by our community of forebears, and we can only take meaningful action as a community today, by working together. But the most important community of all is the community of tomorrow. That's who we are acting for today. And they will judge us by our actions, not our words.

So I want to thank you all, really fully and sincerely, for all your help in saving and restoring Norfolk's wildlife. And I want to say this: please continue to encourage and enable us to act boldly for Norfolk's wildlife. For the community of tomorrow. We won't regret it!"

4. Presentation of the Sydney Long Memorial Medal for 2026

The Sydney Long Memorial Award is presented every two years for outstanding voluntary contribution to natural history and conservation in Norfolk. This year there have been two awards.

Carl Chapman: Tony Leech (Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists Society) described Carl's wildlife education and tours, support for Trust educational events, birdwatching and photography, service as the Society's Chair and work as Norfolk's cetacean recorder, including research culminating in a book. His award had been arranged in August shortly before his death.

Alice Liddle: Matthew Bradbury, Chair, presented the second award to Alice, noting that she had been appointed as Norfolk Wildlife Trust Chair in 2019 and as a Vice-President in 2025. Alice had led an external governance review, refreshed vision and strategy, and encouraged developments of youth participation and collaboration. Her continuing voluntary legal advice and involvement with the Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists Society were acknowledged. Alice accepted the award and thanked the Trust.

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

5. A number of questions were raised in person at the meeting and in advance of the meeting and a selection of these, and their answers, are shown below:

Q: A member asked about the Trust's response to AI-related risks.
A: The Chief Executive confirmed that an AI policy governed permitted tools. Work continued on the wider environmental implications, particularly energy and water use, and on the Trust's developing position. He reported that a Wildlife Trusts position statement on data centres existed and that the Trust had objected to the proposed Norwich data centre because of insufficient environmental analysis in the planning application.

Q: A member called for better coordination of river-restoration initiatives and suggested Wood Norton could demonstrate an integrated approach.
A: The Chief Executive described a senior-level collaboration group involving the Trust, Rivers Trust, Natural England, Environment Agency, water company and farm clusters, intended to align activity around a common vision. It was noted that there would be a stronger organisational focus on freshwater recovery.

Q: There was a query on progress towards the stated 2030 carbon-neutral ambition.
A: The Chief Executive reported that resources and external advisers were now in place and work on the net-zero pathway would be undertaken by the end of 2026. Buildings and the vehicle fleet, particularly off-road towing vehicles, presented significant challenges. He intended to seek investment through the next budget process and expected further reporting in the following year's impact report. No assurance of meeting the 2030 target was given.

Q: It was queried as to how the Trust chose which land should be acquired for acquisition
A: The Nature Conservation Director explained the acquisition matrix. Criteria included area, landscape connectivity, links to existing holdings, accessibility and existing protection. Scoring informed whether a proposal progressed to the senior team and, following its approval, to Council for acquisition approval.

The President confirmed that questions submitted that had not been addressed would receive answers published on the Trust's website.

A talk entitled 'Hope for the Future: Returning Wood Norton to Nature' was given by NWT Steve Collin, Nature Conservation Manager – East, and Rachel Savage, Director of Development and Partnerships, and a question and answer session followed.

The President thanked Steve and Rachel for their informative talk and thanked each of the speakers, Marion for all her years service and all those involved in setting up today's meeting. Finally, Patrick thanked everyone present for being part of Norfolk Wildlife Trust and for attending the AGM and wished them all a good evening.