Questions from AGM 2026

Question:	Response:
Last year I asked a question about the proposed 'wilder Hickling' and boardwalk at Hickling. The written answer said that no schedule 1 birds nested in the vicinity. It would be useful to know more about this statement. For example amongst others we know kingsfishers are often seen in the area alongside Hill Common, and other birds heard e.g. cetti's warblers. Have you a copy of the survey which has identified what birds are there, please?	General wildlife and ornathological surveys at Hickling and local specialist knowledge strongly indicates there are no schedule 1 birds that nest at Hill Common. Prior to any proposed works, detailed environmental surveys would be undertaken to ensure that no protected species would be impacted by construction of the boardwalk. These surveys have not been undertaken yet as they are a snapshot in time and need to occur as closely as possible to any proposed work. Evidence that no protected species would be impacted or disturbed is required by Natural England who are the consenting body for the Site of Special Scientific Interest and the Broads Authority who are the local planning authority. All survey work would be thoroughly scrutinised and assessed by these statutory organisations as well as NWT specialists.
Does the NWT have a policy on the potential of an increased beaver population in the county helping to increase water storage as the climate crisis worsens?	Yes, NWT has a positon on beavers, we are supportive of catchment-based wild beaver releases as long as they are in line with the current regulations, have a significant amount of local support and a positive ecological effect. NWT is one of three founding WTs that have initiated the Eastern Region Beaver Advisory Group that includes a range of stakeholders including farmers, landowners, Internal Drainage Board reps, Broads Authority, local/county councils, community and other environmental groups across Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex to ensure future co-existence with wild beavers and that everyone can be represented in the decisions made about how Norfolk beaver populations are established. In the new year information will be available on our website.
How is the trust going to support the activities of sailors, windsurfers, kayakers and other small boats on and around Hickling Broad - activities which have been going on for more than a hundred years with low impact on wild life? And how will you support the ongoing viability of your tenants at whispering reeds boat yard and the windsurfing and sailing clubs? I see very little about this in any of the publicity you write about developments at Hickling and the surrounding area and I worry that you will make it more and more difficult for those of us who enjoy / derive livelihoods from being on the water.	NWT really values the relationships that we have with the Sailing Club and the Windsurfing club and recognises the value of suppprting low impact recreational activity on the Broad. Within the Wilder Hickling vision is a commitment to continue to support these activities and includes things such as improved facilities e.g. for hosing down kayaks after use. NWT will also continue to support other recreational actitiy such as fishing. Our partnership with Nancy Oldfield Trust has been set up to enable more people including those with a wide range of disabilities to enjoy boat trips on the Broad and so far it has been well received with an ambition to expand the offer next year. Although NWT has taken back in hand some of the Whispering Reeds landholding we continue to work closely with the owners to try to ensure the business has a viable future.

Will NWT be involved in Government's proposed apprenticeship project?	The changes the government are making to the apprenticeship scheme are certainly of interest. The recent working group on Early Careers, led by Natalie looked at the different options to create career paths for young people into the Trust and into conservation. Traineeships were identified as the preferred option, as it gave NWT the opportunity to create a training programme specifically suited to starting a career with the Wildlife Trusts in the areas of Nature Conservation, Nature Recovery and Engagement. The Trust ran a similar programme in 2021/2 called Future Professionals, from which the group has gathered the learning and incorporated into the new business proposal for a traineeship. Main benefits are: Training is specific to what is needed by the Trust for an entry level role We can seek external funding for the full cost, so trainees can be in addition to existing staff We can maintain our commitment to paying Real Living Wage It avoids reliance on a training provider – experiences have been mixed in the past Whilst the priority has been to put together a business case for the traineeship scheme, this does not prevent the Trust from also taking on apprenticeships. In the new year, I will be working with managers to identify where current staff would benefit from apprenticeships or where new roles could be advertised as apprenticeships.
Who are the Trustees - how are they selected, appointed and supported	The Trust's Nominations Group manages the process of Trustee, President, Vice-President and Ambassador recruitment, and also succession planning for the Chair and Vice-Chair positions to ensure the required mixture of skills and experienced people are on the Trustee Board. This Group is chaired by an independent Trust member (Andrew Barnes). this year the Nominations Group agreed that the priority was keeping stability with the current Trustee Board and therefore there should be no active recruitment in 2026. This is due to the large number of Trustees on the Board and the fact that many of the Trustees were reasonably new and that I had only taken over the Chari role in 2025. The Nominations Group also agreed to continue its focus on Board diversity by undertaking an audit and holding a workshop to consider how the Trust's recruitment procedures could further support a more diverse Trustee Board. The Group is working towards having a strategy in place by the end of March 2027. All Trustees undertake an induction with the senior team and have regular meetings and an annual review with the Chair

What does the Trust do for disabled members	We are committed to improving access to nature and our reserves for disabled visitors. We have created a new audience development plan which sets out how we are going to support different groups of people to enjoy nature at our sites and disabled people are a key priority for us. We have appointed an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Officer to focus on this area of our work to make sure, where possible, what we do is inclusive. We are currently working on a project proposal which will involve carrying out accessibility audits of some of our reserves and visitor centres to explore how we can make sure that everyone can access and enjoy them. We hope that this will provide us with some recommendations that we can put in place, subject to available resources. Our newest urban reserve, Sweet Briar Marshes in Norwich, has been designed with disabled visitors in mind from the outset. We worked really closely with Dave Shagra from Inclusive Norwich (who is a wheelchair user himself) and Vision Norfolk so that we could learn from people with lived experience about how we could make the site accessible. We have put in accessible paths, seating, changing places toilets and blue badge parking. All the signage there uses the REACT system so visitors who are visually impaired can listen to a description of the signage. We were really proud that Dave described the reserve as a 'gold standard for accessibility' but we know we have many more sites and hope we can do more to improve some of those in the future. Inclusive Norwich have also visited Cley Visitors Centre and provided us with a accessibility report, highlighting improvements that can be made so we hope to action some of these. In addition, we are also currently documenting the paths and infrastructure associated with access across our nature reserves using the Norfolk County Council National Trails methodology so that visitors have the necessary data to make an informed decision on whether a site can meet their access requirements. Our communications and marketing team are assisting with how the data will be formatted so that it can be presented to the public in a meaningful and useful way. There is a huge amount of information for each site and this will be built onto the NWT website – watch this space. We know we have much to do, and hope that over time we can make more of our sites welcoming for everyone – we would welcome any feedback or ideas on improvements that can be made especially from members who do have a disability.
Given that animal agriculture is the greatest single cause of biodiversity loss globally and a significant contributor to climate change, why is this fact never mentioned in your communications with members and why are there so few plant based options available at your food outlets.	We recognise that Norfolk like the rest of the country and the world is facing a climate emergency which threatens our wildlife and nature. Part of our response to this is a commitment to work closely with Norfolk farmers and landowners across the county to try to encourage farming and food production that works in harmony with nature and wildlife and addresses the causes and impacts of climate change. This includes both providing advice on nature recovery as well as practical activity such as pond and meadow restoration and creation. At our cafes we try to offer a range of food options that meet different requirements and budgets, this includes a selection of vegetarian and vegan choices such as soups, sandwiches jacket potatoes, vegan pasty, plus a vegan breakfast bap and vegan cakes. From time to time we may not be able to supply a vegan cake option but we do endeavour to have this available as often as possible. As much as possible we also try to source our ingredients and supplies locally so that we can support local businesses and minimise the transportation impacts.

Please will you ask First Bus to put a stop (outward and inward) close to an entrance to Broadland Country Park. Bus to Horsford is 36 but it is a long walk currently and busy road to main entrance - thank you	Thank you for rasing this concern. Any request for a new bus stop will need to come from Broadland District Council as bus infrastructure is managed by them and not the bus operator. We continue to work closely with Broadland District Council in relation to Broadland Country Park so will add this request for discussion next time we meet. We are also hoping to have a 'brown sign' installed so that it is clearer to visitors how to find the site, but to do so requires permission form the local authority including the Highways Department.
What is the Trust doing to combat AI risks	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
A member called for better coordination of river-restoration initiatives and suggested Wood Norton could demonstrate an integrated approach	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.
There was a query on progress towards the stated 2030 carbon-neutral ambition	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
It was queried as to how the Trust chose which land should be acquired for acquisition	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.