

**Shropshire Wildlife Trust**  
**Minutes of Annual General Meeting**  
**held at 10.30am on 14 October 2023**  
**at Abbeygate Hall, 193 Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury SY2 6AH**

The Chairperson, Roger Owen, welcomed everyone to the meeting which commenced at 10:36.

**1. Apologies**

James Drever (Trustee)

**2. Approval of Minutes**

It was proposed that the minutes of the AGM held on 15 October 2022 be approved. The proposer was Quentin Shaw, seconded by Malcolm Monie. No against. The minutes were taken as read.

**3. Report of Honorary Secretary**

The Trust's Hon. Secretary, Alex Grant, presented the report of the Council of Management to members. A summary is as follows:

The structure of decision making has evolved following the approval of revised Articles of Association at the 2022 AGM. Up to date agreements for branches, affiliated groups and other organisations are ready for presentation and approval at the next Council of Trustees. Thanks were given to the retiring trustee, Richard Carpenter, for his tireless efforts in driving this work to a successful conclusion.

The Wildlife Trusts' report, "Bringing Nature Back – 2030" and Shropshire Wildlife Trusts Trust's "Theory of Change" document help us to align local and national objectives. The Trust's work and achievement of these goals are described in the Summary Annual Review 2022 – 2023 and quarterly editions of the Wildlife Magazine.

Reporting on the Trust's The Net Zero Carbon Emissions by 2030 targets, Alex noted an increase of 5 tCO<sub>2</sub>e compared to last year. This is in part due to a refinement in the estimation of grazing emissions and post COVID return to working in the office. Measures are being taken to reduce or mitigate emissions.

Sincere thanks were given to our volunteers, branches, and affiliated groups.

It was proposed by Andrew Hearle and seconded by Kirsten Mould that the Report of the Council of Management 2022-23 be accepted. All in favour. No against.

#### **4. Treasurer's Report and Annual Accounts 2022-23**

The Treasurer, Steve Marsh, presented the Treasurer's Report as follows.

##### **4.1 Summary**

Overall income and expenditure have increased compared to the prior year by approximately 9%. After allowing for a £5,000 devaluation of the Trust's investments, net income increased by 6% to £415,000. This has directly increased total reserves. There were positive variances for total income and expenditure relative to budget.

##### **4.2 Reserves**

There was a substantial increase in restricted reserves held at year end, but total unrestricted funds reduced to £352,000 and free reserves reduced by £260,000 to £143,000. These reductions are largely attributed to the overestimation of Full Cost Recovery (FCR) charges to be applied to funders. Unrestricted funds therefore had to be used to cover organisation support costs, therefore contributing to the year-end reduction to our unrestricted reserves. Improved controls over FCR budgeting and monitoring have been introduced to mitigate against this in the future:

Unrestricted funds were further impacted by a reduction in donations and legacies – from £340,000 in the prior year to £88,000.

##### **4.3 Other Income:**

- Trading and face-to-face membership stable
- Carpark charges brought in £40,000 unrestricted net income
- Growth in digital membership
- Corporate partnerships stable, with potential for further growth

##### **4.4 Financial Risks**

- Significant reduction in grant funding
- Under-achievement of FCR
- Underperformance of unrestricted income streams

The Finance Committee regularly reviews the funding pipeline and takes timely action to reduce costs. The Trust will seek to diversify unrestricted income streams further to provide greater financial resilience. A reserves policy is in place, whereby The Group aims to have at least £250,000 unrestricted net current assets [unrestricted reserves] to cover three months of core operating costs (or ideally, £500,000 to cover six months). As of 1 April 2023, free reserves were below the reserves policy at £143,000. However, this position should be restored via confirmed legacies and those already received in the current financial year.

##### **4.5 Conclusion & Thanks**

Trustees have reviewed the financial position and 3-year projections and have concluded that the organisation is a going concern and accounts have been produced on this basis.

Thanks were given to Sarah Zacharek, Head of Finance and Operations, and her team for their hard work.

It was proposed by Iain Diack and seconded by Laurence Kinnersley that the annual accounts be approved. All in favour. No against.

## **5. Nominations for Election to Council**

Thanks were recorded to Kirsten Mould who is stepping down after 14 years' service as a trustee, and Richard Carpenter who is retiring at the end of his second term. Both have been a great asset to the Trust.

Veronica Cossons (President) and Andrew Hearle (Trustee) are standing for a second four-year term.

Proposed by Kirsten Mould and seconded by Malcolm Monie that the above named be re-elected. All in favour, no against. Welcome to a second 4 years.

### **5.1 New trustees standing for election.**

Mandie Haywood, Amanda Craig, Rob Paul, and Lara Richardson are standing for a first term; their résumés have been available on our website.

Amanda Craig – proposer Andrew Hearle, seconder Kirsten Mould, all in favour, no against

Rob Paul – proposer – Mark Whittle, seconder – Iain Diack, two against. One member raised concerns of a potential conflict of interests between the Trust and Rob Paul's Estate Management role at Savills

Lara Richardson – proposer – John West, seconder, Laurence Kinnersley, all in favour, no against

Mandie Haywood – proposer – Quentin Shaw, seconder Malcom Monie, all in favour, no against

Therefore all 4 new trustees were elected.

They were thanked and welcomed to the Trust.

## **6. Appointment of Auditors**

It was proposed by Malcom Monie and seconded by Steve Marsh that Thorne Widgery LLP were re-appointed as auditor for the financial year ending 31 March 2024, their fourth year of office.

All in favour. No against.

## **7. Any Other Business**

Roger Owen paid tribute to Dr Paul Bell (1941 – 2023), his long association to the Trust as a trustee, President and more latterly, Vice President. With a passion for natural history, he contributed to the establishment of several branches in Shropshire. The Trust celebrates his life and work and gives sincere thanks for all he did.

Richard Grindle, CEO, gave a short update on the Trust's new strategic priorities, achievements since April 2023, and key programmes for 2024 onwards including:

**Goal 1:** Nature is in recovery with abundant, diverse wildlife and natural processes creating wilder land and seascapes

Projects being done on a greater scale, across boundaries. Wilder Marches is a joint programme with 4 wildlife trusts, crossing into Herefordshire and Wales. Team of 2 are working with land managers and farmers to give advice, help securing funding to undertake projects for nature

Species projects – the Beaver Project has now started and will be one of first urban captive release schemes of beavers.

**Goal 2:** People taking meaningful action for nature and the climate.

- Working with young people has grown in scale via Environmental Leadership Programme, recruiting 100 people per year over next 4 years
- Nature recovery network surveying programme continues, working within the government's guidelines, mapping the landscape, and helping to direct resources to the right places
- Political engagement and campaigning directly and via our members & supporters. We are not aligned with a particular political party but will continue to champion for nature, challenge politicians and hold them to account

**Goal 3:** Nature is playing a central and valued role in helping to address local and global problems.

Encouraging a nature-based solution at the forefront of decision making e.g., work at Corvedale; carbon sequestration, rewetting peatland to aid biodiversity and carbon sequestration at Charles Sinker Fields

Nature based solutions also connects with people to aid physical and mental wellbeing. This is done via 3 programmes – Feed the Birds; green social prescribing; Nextdoor Nature.

We will continue to explore how to scale up our activity to have an even greater impact in Shropshire and beyond.

All present were thanked for their attendance and the Chair closed the meeting at 11.22 am.

The AGM was followed by a talk by Pete Lambert, Izzy Sinclair and Oliver Terndrup from the Trust's Land and Water Team. They provided an overview of recent projects including Pond Life and the River Worfe restoration project.

*Meeting closed at 12:30*