



**Shropshire Wildlife Trust**  
**Minutes of Annual General Meeting**  
**held at 10.30am on 12 October 2024**  
**at Abbeygate Hall, 193 Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury SY2 6AH**

The Chairperson, Roger Owen, welcomed everyone to the meeting which commenced at 10:34.

**1. Apologies**

Rory Lay, Laurence Kinnersley

**2. Approval of Minutes**

It was proposed that the minutes of the AGM held on 14 October 2023 be approved. The proposer was Mandie Haywood, seconded by Fiona Wilson. 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 copy is provided in Appendix A.

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

It was proposed by Quentin Shaw and seconded by James Drever that the report of the Council of Management 2023-24 be accepted. All in favour. No against.

**4. Treasurer's Report and Annual Accounts 2023-24**

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

**4.1 Summary**

- Overall income has increased compared to prior year by 15% however expenditure was up by 29%. There has been an Increase in restricted reserves held at the end of the year, but unrestricted funds have reduced to £352k. Free reserves are at £143k

**4.2 Key points of note**

- Full cost recovery principles and better controls around project set up, together with improved management helps to ensure that Full Cost Recovery (FCR) is more in line with budgets.
- Membership has reduced slightly, and efforts will be made in the coming year to address this
- Financial position is regularly reviewed by Finance Committee. The Trust aims to have diversity in unrestricted income wherever possible to provide greater financial resilience. Aim is £250k as free unrestricted reserves to cover 3 months of operating costs, or ideally 6 months at £500k.

Although not currently we are at £143k some confirmed legacies set to be received within the year should bring our position in line with policy.

#### **4.3 Conclusion and thanks**

Financial projections been reviewed and determine the organisation is a going concern and accounts have been produced on this basis.

Thanks expressed to Sarah Zacharek and the Finance Committee for their support over the year.

It was proposed by Gordon Scorer and seconded by Mandie Haywood that the annual accounts be approved. All in favour. No against.

#### **5.0 Re-elections to Council**

Roger Owen is stepping down as Chair after 4 years' service in the post. He will remain as a Trustee until October 2025, at which point he will have served 8 years in total. Roger has been a great asset to the Trust and his dedication is much appreciated.

Standing for a further 4-year term are Trustees Malcolm Monie and Steve Marsh.

Proposed by Mandie Haywood and seconded by Quentin Shaw that the above named be re-elected. All in favour, no against.

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

Rory Lay was co-opted as a Trustee on 22 May 2024, he is standing for a four-year term and his résumé has been available on our website. Gordon Scorer is standing for a four-year term, and his résumé has been available on our website.

Rory Lay – proposer Christine Gore (Member), seconder Malcolm Monie, all in favour, no against.

Gordon Scorer – proposer – Mandie Haywood, seconder – James Drever, all in favour, no against.

Therefore, both new trustees were elected. They were thanked and welcomed to the Trust.

#### **6.0 Appointment of Auditors**

It was proposed by Veronica Cossons and seconded by Jacki Dyer that Thorne Widgery LLP were re-appointed as auditor for the financial year ending 31 March 2025, their fifth year of office.

All in favour. No against.

#### **7.0 Any Other Business**

##### **7.1 Thanks to Roger Owen**

Alex Grant shared words of appreciation for Roger Owen's service to Shropshire Wildlife Trust as a Trustee and Chair. The Trust has been through a great period of change over the last 4 years, including the appointment of a new CEO, new Senior Leadership Team members. The trebling of turnover indicates our increasing relevance in this world, demands effective management of our affairs and resilience in financial management. All within COVID pandemic.

Alex thanked Roger on behalf of the Trustees and members.

Roger also took the opportunity to thank the Trustees, CEO for leading change during difficult times; the staff for their hard work and commitment, volunteers, and members.

## **7.2 CEO Update**

Richard Grindle, CEO, gave a short update on the Trust's new strategic priorities, achievements since April 2024, and key programmes for 2025 onwards including:

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

Local nature recovery strategy being drawn up by Shropshire Council, with SWT as the main NGO on the steering group and helping to write the. Alongside this is a detailed mapping process to map habitat in existence, where it could be restored to create the nature recovery network.

Our nature reserves are only 0.25% of land in Shropshire, so working within other landowners is vital to achieve an impact at the scale required. For example we are creating and restoring ponds to provide habitat for great crested newts on third party land.

The boardwalk and 8-hectare enclosure for beavers is now complete, with the hope to have beavers there by the end of this winter.

Chales Sinker Fields rewetting project is completed, with extra funding obtained to complete work on both sides of the road.

Following fundraising to enable the purchase of Darwin's Garden 10 years ago, it has now been sold to the Darwin Birthplace Trust. This reunites the garden with The Mount as a combined heritage site. Legal protection exists for the garden.

Betchcott Hill purchase – 50 hectares, local wildlife site with some good habitat including wet flushes, great potential for nature. Purchased for £900k, made possible with a donation from one member, grants, and sale proceeds of Darwin's Garden. An appeal is launching soon to make up the remainder of the purchase price. SWT will restore and manage the land over the next 30 years, costing £2.5M. This will be funded through Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) as a means for housebuilders to mitigate the impact their developments have on nature and wildlife.

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

- We are working to expand this to new audiences through Community Mobilisation or 'Team Wilder' projects. Working with communities to help them engage with nature – for example, One Voice group in Telford; a new garden in a mosque installed with our support and guidance; helping an Eastern European community group to find ways to meet and enjoy the outdoors.
- Natural childhood activities delivered across the county
- Environmental Leadership Programme is in year 2 of a 4 year project. One hundred people a year attend sessions arranged by SWT and Uprising, helping them to campaign for the environment.
- Working to build relationships with the new cohort of MP's

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

Natural Flood Management (NFM) - a lot of work has taken place on third party land to restore rivers. E.g. River Worfe restoration of backwaters and original channels, allowing natural restoration of the flood plain, restoring a meander. This has multiple benefits – for example, keeping water on the land longer to recharge the aquifer, improves water quality and biodiversity.

Another nature-based solution is wellbeing – getting people outside in nature, taking exercise, volunteering outdoors – all of which is found to be cheaper than therapy and drug treatments. We are exploring how these services can be provided further.

All present were thanked for their attendance and the Chair closed the meeting at 11.24 am.

The AGM was followed by a talk from Andrew Fusek-Peters. He shared a range of photographs captured across Shropshire, including images featured in magazines and his most recent book, Butterfly Safari.

*Meeting closed at 12:25*

## ***Appendix A: Full Report of Hon. Secretary: Council of Management***

Good morning. It is gratifying to welcome such a large attendance. To those who haven't previously met me, my name is Alex Grant. I have been involved with Shropshire Wildlife Trust in various roles since I moved to the county some twenty-odd years ago. I have been a Trustee since 2018 and have served as Secretary for the past four years. It gives me great pleasure to present to you this annual report on behalf of the Trustees.

The Trustees continue to play an important role in the direction and governance of the Trust. This includes attendance at our quarterly Council meetings and by sitting on various committees to ensure that the work of the Trust meets our objects and addresses other relevant matters of regional, national, or indeed global concern. Many Trustees also sit on external committees and play significant roles in other organisations, thus enhancing our influence outside the Trust.

Under the leadership of our Chair, Roger Owen, and our Chief Executive, Richard Grindle, the structure of the Trust has continued to evolve. Key amongst this are further significant changes to our Senior Leadership Team, and it is appropriate to summarise these to enable Members to appreciate more fully the current direction of travel within the Trust.

Two important departures were pending at the end of the reporting period. These were:

- Jan McKelvey, Head of Conservation, who was with us for 35 years, and
- Pete Lambert, Head of Land and Water, after almost 18 years.

Both were highly valued senior staff who achieved much in their respective fields as the Trust grew to its present size and relevance. To both, we offer our very best wishes – in Jan's case for a long and happy retirement and to Pete every success in his new role with the Environment Agency.

These departures presented an opportunity to restructure and expand Jan's and Pete's roles into three separate leadership positions:

- Luke Neal, Head of Nature Recovery, promoted from within on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024,
- Tom Freeland, Head of Nature Reserves, appointed but not yet commenced at year end, and
- Recruitment of a new Head of Policy and Evidence, role since filled by Fran Lancaster.

Other significant appointments during the year included:

- Anna Pierce, Human Resources Manager,
- Fraser Baker, Evidence and Data Officer, and
- Faye Setchfield, Operations Manager, appointed but not yet commenced at year-end.

And we welcomed Lucy Povall as maternity cover for Helen O'Connor, Head of Development.

To all, we offer our best wishes and support in their roles with the Trust.

With a refreshed and strengthened senior leadership team in place, our decision-making and activities have continued to evolve. Some salient matters will be covered within the Finance Report. Our Articles of Association were revised in 2022 and then followed by amendments to our Governance Manual. Subsequently, simplified up-to-date agreements for our branches, affiliated groups and other organisations were prepared and circulated for signature in early 2024.

Though not new, it is worth recalling that in 2022 our national organisation, The Wildlife Trusts, published “Bringing Nature Back – 2030”, with a “*vision of a natural world with our wildlife and natural habitats playing a valued role in addressing the climate and ecological emergencies, and everyone inspired to get involved in nature’s recovery*”. The report details three goals to place the environment at the very core of life in the United Kingdom, namely:

- *30% of land managed for nature* (commonly known as the 30:30 campaign),
- *1 in 4 people taking meaningful action* (considered to represent the critical mass for positive impact), and
- *Nature-based solutions are being adopted.*

These goals are consistent with our objectives, and we have since adopted them within our Theory of Change. Along with other national initiatives and campaigns, they provide to us and other regional Trusts a unified message whilst maintaining autonomy to work effectively in our respective regions.

In reporting on some of the headline achievements over the past year, I remain mindful of the above goals and of the Trust’s objects. Our activities have included:

- SWT Reserves – 85% in favourable condition or recovering
  - Molverley Meadows – restored ponds
  - Llynclys Common – increased limestone grassland – early purple orchids
  - Wem Moss – rewetting – flourishing bog asphodel and cotton grass
  - Catherton Common / Cramer Gutter – scrub cutting – increased marsh gentian and small pearl-bordered fritillaries
  - Charles Sinker Fields – rewetted peat and new pond – more on this later
- Land Management Advice – provided to 200 farmers covering >8,000ha of land and >100km of waterway
- Hedgerows – 1,800m planted
- Natural Flood Management – 43 projects, including
  - 45 new or restored ponds for great crested newts
  - River Worfe – restoration of the natural watercourse
  - removal of Himalayan balsam
- Old River Bed – beaver enclosure substantially completed
- Nature Recovery Network
  - strategy development, with eight other organisations
  - 80 sq km surveyed by volunteers
- Branches and Ambassadors – engaged with >4,000 people with walks, talks and events
- Community Mobilisation – engagement with ethnic groups in urban environment
- Children and Young People – >2,250 reached through our various programmes
- Health and Wellbeing – developing and delivering green social prescribing initiatives

These and many of our other achievements and activities are included in the Summary Annual Review 2023-2024, which was circulated with the latest issue of Wildlife magazine. Additional information is frequently featured in Wildlife magazine. After the conclusion of this AGM, Richard will expand upon some of our more recent and future work in furtherance of the Trust's goals and objects.

In line with the motion adopted at the 2019 AGM, the commitment to reducing the Trust's carbon emissions to net zero by 2030 remains a key objective. Work continues to reduce our emissions with the acquisition of electric vehicles (along with an overall reduction in the size of our vehicle fleet) and we have established hybrid working practices. We are now trialling the use of "No fence" technology with the aim of reducing the numbers of livestock required for effective conservation grazing.

Importantly, the national organisation now agrees that where carbon is sequestered through additional interventions, as opposed to pre-existing activity, this can be offset against our operational emissions. The recent acquisition and rewetting of Charles Sinker Fields is just such an example, resulting in an estimated annual saving of some 390 tCO<sub>2</sub>e. This saving is subject to external ratification but indicates that as an organisation we can now be considered to be carbon neutral. However, before we can go on to claim net zero status, we must, and will continue to, identify and reduce emissions wherever practical. A more detailed analysis and discussion of our journey towards net zero can be found at page 10 of the current issue of Wildlife magazine.

Finally, we again recognise the superb efforts of our volunteers, branches, and affiliated groups. In the past year, this amounted to more than 29,000 hours, which is the equivalent of nineteen full-time staff. To them, to our ambassadors, to our generous benefactors and funders, and of course to our dedicated staff, the Trustees offer sincere thanks.

Thank you all for your continuing support of Shropshire Wildlife Trust.