

SHEFFIELD WILDLIFE TRUST

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Thursday 24th September 2020



Sheffield &
Rotherham

Attending

Christopher Pennell Chair	Ann Clegg	Richard Frost	Diana Rybinski
Mark Ridler Vice Chair	Sarah Blandy	Kate Napier	Anna Pethen
Tom Dodd Treasurer	Mike Price	Martyn Wells	Dave Higgins
Suzanne Leckie Trustee	Julian Crooks	Aline Roberts	Susan Morley
Niel Stewart Trustee	Holly Schofield	John Roberts	Maria Judge
Andrew Parker Trustee	Wendy Birks	Kate Pinder	Paul Sanderson
Andrew Perrins Trustee	Helen Francis	Sheila Kearney	Claire Bygate
Kris Craik Trustee	Steven Connelly	Margretha Pearman	
James Hall Trustee	Jo Boardman	Janet Williams	Rosemary Badoe
Ben Stone Trustee	Jill Edmondson	Jill Laureston	Marion Hogg
Stephen Campbell Trustee	Roger Hesterman	Jill Whitaker	James Hogg
Niel Stewart Trustee	Mary Bill	Molly Powell	Gillian Pawson
Kris Craik Trustee	John Guest	Peter Robinson	Stuart Trickey
Kris Mackay Trustee	Polly Blacker	Ursula Butler	Paul Maddox
Alison Holt Trustee	Jo Hopkinson	Una Moran	Chris Measures
	Jenny Allen	Graham Allen	Sue Shaw
	Sue Clarke	Peter Long	Pete Feetham
	Sarah Knight-Markiegi		Gill Baggott
	Susan Unwin	Gary Hunt	Wendy Robson
	Jill Croskell	Dinah Ward	Alex Young
	Sarah Dalrymple	Nicky Rivers	Sally Turnbull
	Camilla Rootes	Paddy Sherwell	Janet Fawson
	Neil Fawson	Richard Pethen	Susie Casson
	Steve Webster	Kate Napier	Aline Roberts
	Jill Whitaker	Sue Taylor	Timothy Simpkins
	Stephen Goodare	Gillian Coghlan	
	Karen Allison	Judith Haslam	Catherine Downes
	Andrew Manasse	Gillian Pawson	Sarah Smith
	Alison Milne	Sue Shaw	John Scholey
	Gareth Hunt	Wendy Robson	Dinah Ward
	Alex Young	Ann Blair	

Liz Ballard CEO

Lynn Campbell Minutes

Christopher Pennell (CP), the Chair of the Trustees, welcomed members to the AGM, and declared the meeting quorate. He explained that the papers for the members had been sent via email including the agenda, the minutes of the 2019 AGM and biographies for the prospective Trustees. Due to the Covid pandemic this year's AGM is running as a virtual event and to enable members to vote, an online poll will be taken at various stages, on such matters as the approval of the minutes of the 2019 AGM and the annual report accounts for the year ended 31 March 2020 and the election of Trustees.

The full annual report and accounts will be available on our website.

Apologies

None given

1. Minutes of the 2019 AGM

CP asked if members had any comments on the 2019 minutes to note them in the online chat box. No comments were made.

An Online Poll was held to consider and, if thought fit, approve the minutes of the 2019 AGM.

Approved: 37

Not Approved: 0

The minutes of the 2019 AGM were approved as a true record of the meeting.

2. Matters Arising

No matters arising.

3. Trust Report 19/20

Liz Ballard (LB) CEO explained that she would give a brief summary of the organisation and the aims and objectives of the Trust.

The Trust's Vision is:

We want to see a Living Landscape – an amazing, green landscape for the wildlife and people of Sheffield and Rotherham – which is understood, enjoyed and cared for by local people and organisations.

We achieve this within our four outcome groups:

Creating a Network for Nature

Connecting People with Nature

Taking Action for Nature

Corporate Outcome Ensuring A Well Run Organisation.

The meeting would focus on the Trust's Corporate Outcome, ensuring a well-run organisation. This includes good governance and enthusiastic, skilled and supported staff and volunteers. Well managed resources, strong membership and an excellent organisational reputation.

Good Governance and Leadership

We successfully recruited new Trustees to the Board at our last AGM in 2019, following our open recruitment process. As a result we have had a full Board of 13 Trustees throughout 19/20. Unfortunately, due to a number of unexpected issues such as flooding and Covid 19, the Board has had limited face to face meeting time but we have still been able to meet regularly online. This has been especially important towards the end of the 19/20 financial year as lockdown started and decisions need to be made quickly in relation to operations and staff support.

As usual, we have reviewed the skill set of the Board, and considered who is leaving us either because they wish to stand down for personal reasons, or because they had completed their 3 or 6 year terms.

This year, Krys Craik has completed her 6 year term and I would like to thank her on behalf of all the staff at the Trust for the incredible commitment and support she has shown to our work, in particular around woodland creation and our work with Green Estate.

Alison Holt has also decided to stand down after one term because of other work pressures and again I would like to thank Alison on behalf of all the staff for all the support she has given us, particularly in developing our work around natural capital and nature recovery.

And of course Christopher Pennell, our Chair, will be leaving the Board at this AGM this evening. On behalf of the staff but also personally I would like to thank Christopher for all his support and guidance over the last 6 years and especially during this last 6 months as we have had to respond to Covid 19. As a token of our thanks, the Trust would like to present Christopher with Life Membership and invite him to plant a tree in the garden at Victoria Hall in the near future.

Enthusiastic and Supported Skilled Staff and Volunteers

We normally have an annual staff and volunteer site visit but in 2019 this took us a little further afield than usual.

A group of staff and volunteers from the Trust took part in a trip to London to join the 'Mass Lobby' of MPs around Parliament. Many spoke directly to their local MP about the need for a strong Environment Act and nature's recovery. We managed to somehow appear on Sky News!

To find out how our staff are faring during the year, we carry out an annual staff survey. We have undergone a refurbishment of Victoria Hall and so many staff had gone through a month or so of home working (little did we know how useful this would be). Despite this upheaval feedback was still very positive:

- 90% of staff agreed/strongly agreed the Trust was a well-run organisation.
- 100% of staff agreed/strongly agree that the Executive Team are working towards the Executive Team Charter.
- 97% of staff agreed/strongly agreed the Trust is a good organisation to work for.

Volunteers

In 19/20 we also managed to survey our volunteers for the first time in a while. As well as helping us to improve our volunteer offer, we also had good news there, with great feedback that 100% agreed/strongly agreed that their supervisor was supportive, encouraging and approachable. This is a testament to the volunteer managers and the great work they do.

Well Managed Resources

Our general funds have increased year on year with 19/20 being an excellent year with £400,835. This includes timber income, earned income from contracts, especially Wildscapes, which had an excellent year. Tom Dodd our Treasurer will go into our financial picture in more detail.

This improvement in our financial reserves over the last few years has really helped us to feel more resilient as we have gone through 20/21 and Covid 19.

Of course one of our biggest assets is our office base Victoria Hall. We have refurbished the building to improve the space, utilising the space more efficiently and improving our rental capability.

Strong Membership

Membership has been growing in 19/20 following a re-organisation and investment in a small team who focus particularly on digital recruitment and raising our profile online through websites and social media. We have found this to be a more cost effective way of people finding out about us and joining as a new member.

Whether this upturn continues as we go further into 2020 remains to be seen. And briefly I must mention how the Trust has fared since April this year.

Looking ahead 20/21

Sheffield & Rotherham Nature Reserves were well used during lockdown. This did result in some additional rubbish, fly tipping, use of BBQs etc. but on the whole it was good to see that our Nature Reserves offered a place for many to find some sense of peace or relaxation during lockdown.

We are continuing to work towards our aims as planned for the year, including pressing on with highlighting the nature crisis and solutions to it, developing Nature Recovery Networks, responding to the Sheffield Local Plan, exploring the potential for a Nature Centre in Rotherham and ongoing engagement with those feeling isolated or disconnected from nature.

We would like to send a heartfelt thank you to you, our members, for your help and support throughout 19/20 and in to 20/21 and the Covid lockdown. We have had some fantastic messages from you and they have really helped to keep us all going.

4. Financial Report 19/20

Tom Dodd (TD) the Trust's Treasurer confirmed that the annual accounts for 19/20 will be available online.

Key Points

The Trust's total consolidated income in the year to 31 March 2020 increased by over 57% to £2,736,844 (2019: £1,734,406):

- Grant income increased by 39% (2020: £1,334,808; 2019: £961,822).
- Donations and legacies (including membership) more than doubled to £673,315 (2019: £316,679).
- Contract income increased by 20% to £512,534 (2019: £427,528). The Trust continues to make concerted efforts to increase contract income with a particular focus on Wildscapes.

The Trust had a very good year as shown by a big increase in turnover from £1.7 million to £2.7 million. This was driven by the Sheffield Lakeland Landscape Partnership (SLLP), the sale of timber and increased contracts delivered.

Our unrestricted income has increased including donations and legacies being received, this has helped our financial outlook going forward into 20/21 and the challenges faced due to the Covid19 pandemic.

Wildscapes CIC

Wildscapes enjoyed a very profitable year (2020: £44,638; 2019: £16,493). All profits will be distributed via Gift Aid to the Trust in 2021. Gift Aid of £16,493 was distributed in 2020.

Trust Pension Scheme

The Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts' defined benefit (final salary) scheme had its triennial valuation as at 1st April 2019. The scheme's overall deficit is lower at £4.7m (2016 valuation: £5.9m). However, four Wildlife Trusts have left the scheme under Section 75 legislation. As a result, our share of the scheme's deficit has increased. In the year to March 2020 our total provision for the pension scheme is £87,922 (2019: £130,105).

Membership

Membership income decreased by 4% and membership numbers have fallen slightly.

Contract Income

Tom Dodd explained that contract income increase was mainly due to Wildscapes (£211,000 income on contracted work).

Restricted and Unrestricted Funds

Restricted funds have increased by 49% (largely relating to the SLLP).

Unrestricted funds increased by 35% which puts us in a good place going forward with the Covid19 challenges we face.

20/21 will be more difficult as we have experienced lockdown and activities have slowed or been suspended, which will impact on income generation.

CP commented that it is useful for the Trust to have some flexibility in our general funds, as this has enabled us to revitalise Victoria Hall to enable increasing the tenancy income. He also commented how valuable it is to have TD as our Treasurer with his experience in the accountancy field and Paul Harrington with his knowledge and experience.

TD wished to thank Paul Harrington and the Finance Team who, despite this difficult time with the Covid19 pandemic, had successfully completed the accounts.

An online poll was held to consider and, if thought fit, to approve the 19/20 Annual Report and Audited Accounts.

Approved: 37

Not Approved: 0

The 19/20 Annual Report and Audited Accounts were accepted and approved by the members.

5. Appointment of Auditors

TD said that at the 2019 AGM we undertook to carry out a competitive tender process for appointment of the Trust's auditors.

This was carried out and we received several quotes. These were considered by the Trustee Board.

The Trustee Board considered such matters as the service levels and cost of the services offered by the tenderers. We decided to continue with Tingle Ashmore as our auditor for the next 3 years.

6. Election of Trustees

CP explained that under the Trust's Governing documents, Trustees who have completed one 3 year term of office are required to stand down but are eligible to stand for re-election for a second 3 year term. Trustees are not eligible to stand again after completing a second 3 year term.

This year Kris Craik has completed her 6 year term and therefore is standing down. CP has known her for many years, as a professional landscape architect and has been invaluable for the experience and expertise she has brought to the Board. CP thanked her for her contribution to the Board.

Alison Holt has completed her first 3 year term and will be standing down from the Board, she has contributed to the Board with her knowledge and expertise of biodiversity net gain, CP would like to thank her for her contribution to the Board.

Mark Ridler has completed his first 3 year term and is seeking re-election to the Board for a second term.

CP has also completed his 6 year term and is standing down. CP said it has been a privilege to serve as Chair on the Trustee Board and would like to say the CEO Liz Ballard is excellent in how she leads the Trust and how her leadership is taking the Trust forward.

LB also wished to express her thanks to CP adding that his support and good advice was greatly appreciated. In recognition of his contribution to the Trust we would like to provide him with a lifetime membership and in the near future to plant a tree at Victoria Hall garden.

LB passed the floor to Mark Ridler.

Mark Ridler noted that CP had been chair for five years a period during which the Trust had affirmed its identity as separate regional Wildlife Trust and had grown greatly in size and influence. He said CP has been an active and dedicated chair who as keenly aware of the Board's role in governance and strategic guidance. The board would seem very different and diminished without his guiding hand. MR thanked him for all of his work on behalf of all of the members of the board.

CP explained that this is a contested trustee election, there are 4 vacancies on the Board with 7 candidates standing in total and as a Board we do not recommend to our members who they should vote for, it is entirely the members' decision.

This year we carried out an exercise on what skills were needed to complement the existing Board these included:

- Human Relations law and practice
- Land use planning
- Landscape architecture
- The natural heritage sector
- Farming and land management
- Development and management of visitor centres
- Latest ecological thinking
- Ecological and/or land management consultancy

The Board try to maintain a reasonable balance of gender and age in the Board recruitment.

CP explained that 4 candidates will be elected. He said it is a very strong field and asked those that were not elected this year to consider standing again. It is a testament to the Trust and its reputation that we have these candidates who wish to become Trustees.

CP asked all candidates individually to give a brief outline of who they are and why they wish to stand for election to the Trustee Board. He reminded the members that an online poll would be launched to enable them to vote. The candidates with the highest number of votes would be elected to the Board.

One trustee is seeking re-election after completing one 3 year term of office:

Mark Ridler

Mark introduced himself, he has been Vice Chair and was recently appointed Chair Designate by the Board of Trustees. He is Chair of the steering group for SLLP project and is on the Finance Committee and the outcome group for taking action for nature. He

is a pension's solicitor and would like to continue bringing his experience and expertise to the Board.

6 New candidates were standing:

Sarah Blandy

Sarah introduced herself and explained she is a professor of property law and Trustee of Heeley Development Trust and is keen to use her experience and knowledge to bring to the Trust. She is experienced in trust governance, and would also be interested in strengthening SRWT's links with the academic community, and with local government.

Jo Boardman

Jo introduced herself and explained that she is a freelance consultant that has been working with and supporting charities and social enterprises all over the UK for over 20 years with strategic planning, income diversification, governance, organisational change, business engagement and partnership development.

Steven Connelly

Steven introduced himself and explained he has been working in connection with the voluntary sector in Rotherham, with those who are hard to reach. He is Senior Lecturer in Urban Studies & Planning at the University of Sheffield.

Jill Edmondson

Jill introduced herself, she would love the opportunity to become a Trustee with the Trust, and she is a research fellow in the Department of Animal and Plant Sciences at the University of Sheffield. The applied nature of her research has led to collaborations with local authorities, NGOs and the public and she is currently running a UK scale citizen science project.

Helen Francis

Helen introduced herself and wished to thank the Trust for this amazing event. She works as a HR Senior Manager in Rotherham and would like to bring her expertise and experience to the Trust.

Holly Schofield

Holly introduced herself and explained that she is a Senior Policy Advisor on climate change and would like to bring her experience and expertise to the Trust.

Biographies of all the standing candidates have been circulated via email.

CP explained that an online poll would be taken where members could vote for up to 4 candidates, the four candidates who received the highest number of votes would be elected to the Board.

An online poll was launched for election of Trustees.

CP confirmed the candidates elected to the Board.

The Following candidates were elected to the Board of Trustees:

**Mark Ridler
Sarah Blandy
Helen Francis
Holly Schofield**

The Board was at full strength at 13 members.

CP thanked all the candidates who applied.

AOB

None raised.

CP drew the meeting to a close and thanked the members for attending and for supporting the Trust.

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