

# SHEFFIELD WILDLIFE TRUST



## MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

THURSDAY 23<sup>RD</sup> SEPTEMBER 2021 AGM

### Attending

Mark Ridler Chair  
Ben Stone Vice Chair  
Suzanne Leckie Trustee  
Andrew Parker Trustee  
Andrew Perrins Trustee  
Stephen Campbell Trustee  
Kris Mackay Trustee  
Holly Schofield Trustee  
Helen Francis Trustee  
Sarah Blandy Trustee

Alex Young  
Angela Southward  
Anna Field  
Catherine Hershaw  
Christopher Pennell  
Chris Turk  
Claire Bygate  
Deborah Pickvance  
Douglas Ross  
Harriet  
Isobel Buckle  
Janet Hutchinson  
Jen King  
Jennifer Tiddy  
Jenny Swan  
John Harker  
John Rodgers  
John Guest  
Andrew Milne  
Alison Milne

Janet Fawson  
Ken Lambert  
Ramen Sen  
Mary Wilton  
Maureen Howard  
Mike Tomson  
Neil Fawson  
Peter Cogill  
Peter Bradbury  
Nick Jones  
Richard Marshall  
Richard Pethen  
Rob Barnsley  
Sheila Ellin  
Stuart Trickey  
Sue Thomas  
Sue Taylor  
Susan Wright

Liz Ballard CEO

Lynn Campbell Minutes

### Introductions and Apologies

James Hall Trustee  
Tom Dodd Treasurer

Mark Ridler (MR) the Chair of the Trustees, welcomed members to the AGM, and declared the meeting quorate with 50 participating. He explained the proceedings.

The papers for the members had been sent via email including the agenda, the minutes of the 2020 AGM and biographies for the prospective Trustee. This year's AGM is running as the second year 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 2020 AGM and the annual report and accounts for the year ended 31 March 2021 and the election of Trustees.

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

### Minutes of the last Meeting Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> September 2020

MR asked if members had the chance to read the minutes and asked that if they had comments on the 2020 minutes to note them in the online chat box or raise their hands.

No comments were made.

**A vote by raising of virtual hands was held to consider and, if thought fit, approve the minutes of the 2020 AGM and asked for a proposer and seconder.**

**Proposer: Stephen Campbell**

**Secunder: Peter Bradbury**

**Accepted: 50**

**Not Accepted: 0**

The minutes of the 2020 AGM were approved as a true record of the meeting.

### **Matters arising**

**None noted**

### **Trust Report for 20/21**

Liz Ballard (LB) CEO explained that she would give a brief summary of the organisation and the aims and objectives of the Trust and how the year has been for the Trust. We see these factors as being key.

### **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.*

### **Corporate Outcome Ensuring A Well Run Organisation.**

The focus is 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 3 new Trustees to the Board at our first virtual AGM in 2020. A new Chair was appointed. Our previous Chair Christopher Pennell had completed his terms and in recognition of his contribution a lifetime membership was presented to him and we enjoyed a rainy day where we planted a tree at Victoria Hall with him and to thank him for his support.

As a result we had a full Board of 13 Trustees throughout 20/21. Unfortunately, due to Covid 19 and ongoing restrictions the Board has had limited face to face meeting time but we have still been able to meet regularly online which has been well attended. Would like to thank all of our current Trustees for all the support including additional meetings to help the Trust deal with Covid 19.

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, Niel Stewart has completed his 3 year term and will not be standing for re-election to the Board. I would like to thank him on behalf of all the staff at the Trust for the commitment and support he has shown to our work.

The number of staff have increased to over 100, this has been a difficult and challenging year for staff with many having to work from home very quickly, due to lockdown, some staff were furloughed as the work they do couldn't continue during this time, i.e. face to face or contract work and out on site. During this time our staff achieved some exceptional activities, including pod casts, telephone work, packs being sent out to participants and using virtual online tools. We hope the members can be proud of our efforts.

## **Enthusiastic and Supported Skilled Staff and Volunteers**

To find out how our staff are faring during this challenging year, we carried out an annual staff survey. Despite these challenges the feedback was very positive:

- 95.5% of staff agreed/strongly agreed the Trust was a well-run organisation.
- 97.7% of staff agreed/strongly agree that the Executive Team are working towards the Executive Team Charter.
- 97.7% of staff agreed/strongly agreed the Trust is a good organisation to work for.

## **Volunteers**

In 20/21 we carried out a volunteer survey. As well as helping us to improve our volunteer offer, we also had good news there, with great feedback that 99% 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, we had an incredible year in 19/20 although the year ahead and ongoing will be challenging with some funded projects coming to an end which will impact the Trust alongside the new social care levy which will come into force from 1<sup>st</sup> April 22.

## **Strong Membership**

Our membership has been very positive with the trend generally rising, previously we had a dip and we reflected on how to improve this, we changed our approach and how we used digital membership which has gone well. Thank you to all our members who have joined us, with your support during Covid 19.

## **Looking ahead 21/22**

Our strategy has been refreshed for implementation for next year and what we need to do to act for nature recovery, want to change people's action, which will hopefully bring about social change. We want to enable people to have access to nature from their doorstep.

LB asked for any questions

MR mentioned we will be sending out an annual summary by email.

Q Asked about the impact of visitors to the nature reserves on wildlife during lockdown.

LB during the lockdown period and gradual restrictions easing, numbers of people visiting the reserves increased with people wanting to engage more with nature. We wanted people to enjoy and value nature and wildlife, although some people were not considering the impact on the way they used the site, including increased litter, vandalism and wild camping including barbecues and fires.

At times this did disturb the wildlife which had flourished.

With an increase in dog ownership during this period some owners were not abiding by keeping dogs on leads which did disturb the wildlife. We did see a lot of disturbance particularly during bird nesting season. To help us counter these challenges we have a Volunteer Ranger scheme which was trialled at Redmires, Wyming Brook and Blackamoor on the Easter bank holiday, we took it in terms with the Volunteer Rangers and staff who were speaking to visitors and speaking to them, we spoke to over 1,000 people. The numbers using the sites are tailing off. We encourage people to visit and use the sites whilst respecting the sites.

As there are regulations in areas on keeping dogs on leads, and once speaking and engaging with people they are educated on the importance of this.

If anyone wishes to become a volunteer ranger get in touch with us.

We have been working with Yorkshire Water and at Redmires water voles can be seen, we hope to have the Volunteer Rangers there to speak to people.

## **Financial Report for 20/21**

TD apologises for not being able to attend in person and has created a presentation which was delivered by LB and explained that TD had other work priorities, and if anyone has any questions TD can answer them.

The annual accounts for 20/21 will be available online.

The summary of the financial results are income has remained broadly flat at just under £2.7m despite the Covid19 pandemic impact as the Sheffield Lakeland Landscape Partnership (SLLP) funded through Heritage Lottery Fund has continued throughout this financial year.

The overall expenditure therefore consistent year on year.

There is a small gain on endowment fund investments this year following a small loss last year, we use the interest for maintenance work on Centenary Riverside.

Other trading activities, unrestricted funds with timber sales £190k  
Trees at Greno with work to be done.

Donations & legacies includes an Environment Agency, Yorkshire Water donation as an enforcement penalty this year (£175k) which has go towards looking after our nature reserves for Moss Valley.

Membership income increased to £212k from £206k. Up 3% with a small increase in membership numbers

Grants, includes our grant funded projects and depended on the amount of work we were able to deliver.

Contract income increased despite a decline in Wildscapes revenue to £394k (2019-20: £448k) with £26k (2019-20: £45k) profit achieved – primarily due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic in the first half of the financial year.

Unrestricted funds are up to £423k from £401k

Designated Funds £475k including funding from Esmee Fairburn for strategic purposes/financial resilience.

Endowments, Centenary Riverside funds from Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council with a small gain on investments in the year.

Restricted Funds, the growth in this reflects larger projects including SLLP

## **Key Points**

- Increased unrestricted funds to £423k despite the Covid19 pandemic.
- Membership income has been resilient
- Expecting more challenging period in 2021-2022 as funding challenges remain in the sector

## **Wildscapes**

Wildscapes enjoyed another profitable year in 2021 with a surplus of £26,197 (2020: £44,638). All profits will be distributed via Gift Aid to the Trust in 2022. Gift Aid of £44,638 was distributed in 2021.

## **Restricted and Unrestricted Funds**

The Trust's free cash reserve is lower at £444,761 (2020: £458,749).

Again we would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who have given to Sheffield and Rotherham Wildlife over the past year. Your contributions are vital in enabling us to continue our important work to protect and conserve local wildlife.

## **Trust Pension Scheme**

The Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts' defined benefit ('final salary') pension scheme had its triennial valuation at 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019. The fund'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 2021 our total provision for the pension scheme is £56,564 (2020: £87,922).

LB asked if members had any questions

**Q** Can you provide more feedback on SLLP and when this project will end ?

LB explained it's a partnership funded project, with SCC, YW, SRWT, Bradfield Parish Council, smaller partners including local groups. She outlined the areas covered, there has been lots of opportunities through the SLLP funded by the HLF. It is a significant project for the Trust, it's impacted on our ability to work on land not managed by the Trust including working with farmers, fencing of cattle, improving water courses. It is coming to an end in Spring 2023. We are currently looking at a heritage legacy and are exploring new opportunities to take some of this work forward.

**Q** SC asked if the Trust became involved in beaver reintroduction, what is the cost and who would pay?

LB The cost for this would have to be met by the Trust and is difficult to cost fully but would expect between £100 - 200k as the reintroduction is only being carried out in fenced off areas and they are only being released into enclosures, which is quite expensive. The welfare of the animals would have to be monitored which is specialist work, and also stakeholder engagement with adjacent landowners. Security of the site and the animals could be a concern. We could look at any possible sources of external funding opportunities, funding charitable schemes etc., partners, or could ask members and supporters if this would be feasible. The Board would have to agree and we would need to look at it and see if it is feasible to take forward.

**Q.** SC asked if the link with the integrated care services how much funding it will bring in?

LB we are involved in the green prescribing and are lead partner on this with Bassetlaw, we have some funds which come into the Trust for this, and we can only estimate how much more funding this will bring in. Great to see Green Prescribing receiving government funding for this.

**Q.** Asked what we are doing to address the Equality and Diversity in the sector and on visiting the nature reserves and accessibility?

LB Explained that we have the Working for Nature project which helps those who would not have the traditional route into the sector, there are six places (2 in Sheffield, 2 in Nottingham and 2 in Derbyshire). These places when advertised enabled them to have taster sessions through the John Muir award and once in place they complete a comprehensive programme for a year. We have had new arrivals, from the Sudan, recently homeless and not doing well at school, completing the course.

In addition we are working with deprived communities including the Roma community in Rotherham, and consulting with them and listening to new voices, we have changed some of our ID charts on birds into Slovak, including birds typically found in their home countries. We encourage talking about migration.

We are having a focus on equality, diversity and inclusion next year.

We are noticing a change in the demographic of visitors to our reserves, with more diversity of people visiting, which is a positive change.

**MR asked for the members to approve the accounts which had been approved by the Trustee Board.**

**Approved: 44**

**Not Approved: 0**

The members unanimously approved the accounts

### **Appointment of Auditors**

MR commented that we did carry out a review last year and we are remaining with Tingle Ashmore as auditors until the next review period.

### **Election of Trustees**

MR explained that due to Niel Stewart has come to the end of his 3 year term and is not standing for re-election we have one place vacant on the Board of Trustees and would like to thank him for his contribution.

Following open advertising, we have one person who expressed an interest and completed a nomination form, in standing for election to the Board of Trustees, this is an uncontested election.

MR explained that the members have the biography for the prospective trustee and explained that Scott McKenzie is a senior manager as Senior Catchment Manager at the Trent Rivers Trust.

Scott has a broad ecological knowledge but is specialised in aquatic ecology and was previously Living Rivers Programme Manager at Derbyshire WT, overseeing the conservation and recovery of rivers across the county.

MR asked SM to introduce himself, but is not in attendance for the AGM.

MR asked the members to vote to appoint if they saw fit to do so SM to the Trustee Board by use of raised virtual hands if any objections.

**Approved:**

The members voted unanimously to approve and appoint Scott McKenzie as a Trustee

MR confirmed SC is duly appointed as a Trustee for the next three years.

MR asked if members could complete the online evaluation form, and thanked the members for attending.

MR closed the AGM