

Minutes of 61st Annual General Meeting

Dorset Wildlife Trust

Monday 5th December 2022 – 11 am – 12.15pm

Brooklands Farm

<u>In Attendance</u>		<u>Apologies</u>
Mark Kibblewhite (Chair) (MK)	Brian Bleese (BB)	Liesje Birchenough
Anne Wheatcroft (AW)	Jeremy Powne (JP)	John Day
Giles Pugh (GP)	Andrew Pollard (AP)	John McDavid
Jim White (JW)	Imogen Davenport (ID)	Felicity Fairburn
Jo Davies (JD)	John Stobart (JS)	
John Gaye (JG)	Isla Reynolds I(R)	
Nigel Webb (NW)	Kelvyn Derrick (KD)	
Roger Cole (RC)	Sara Thompson (ST)	
Tony Bates (TB)	Sue Patterson (SP)	
Colleen Smith Moore (CSM)	Steve Davis (SD)	
Gail Ninnim (GN)	Will Parke (WP)	
Simon Goldsack (SG)	Lesley Haskins (LH)	
Jeremy Thomas (JT)	Les Bunce (LB)	
Sam Taylor (ST)	Mel Ware (MW) – minutes	

<u>Minutes of Annual General Meeting</u>	
<p>The Chair of Trustees, Mark Kibblewhite, welcomed those in attendance at the 61st annual meeting of Dorset Wildlife Trust (DWT).</p> <p>An amendment was proposed to the published agenda, with Brian Bleese presenting the Review of the Year and Mark Kibblewhite presenting Strategy, Challenges and Opportunities. This was accepted <i>nem.con</i>.</p>	
1.	<p><u>Apologies</u> Noted and accepted, listed above.</p>
2.	<p><u>Declarations of interest</u> None</p>
3.	<p><u>Approval of the minutes of the last AGM</u> The minutes of the 60th AGM held on 6th December 2021 were approved. Proposed by Jo Davies, seconded by John Gaye and accepted <i>nem.con</i>.</p>
4.	<p><u>Commentary on Financial Statements</u> The Director of Finance and Resources presented the consolidated results and balance sheet for DWT and its trading subsidiary for the year ended 31 March 2022, which were approved by the Trustees at the 335th Council meeting on 5th September 2022.</p> <p>DWT an overall surplus for the year ending 31 March 2022 of £4.068m comprising a restricted surplus of £3.6m, unrestricted surplus of £424,000 and an endowment fund surplus of £37,000. The results for the year are affected especially by the inclusion of £3.12 million restricted capital</p>

	<p>grants for the acquisition of land at Wild Woodbury. Income levels in most areas have returned to pre-pandemic levels, as has expenditure as activities have resumed.</p> <p>DWT budgeting is a complex process and includes planned drawdowns of both restricted funds for projects and also from our free reserves, but only to the extent that level of free reserves remains within the parameters of our free reserves policy. We do not include legacy income in our budgets due to the unpredictability of its values and timings. Part of the surplus of £424,000 arising on the unrestricted funds is due to legacy income, which will be spent in future years.</p> <p>The acquisition of land at Wild Woodbury cost £3.87m for 170 ha of land and buildings, which was funded by capitals grants from Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council (£2.79m) and Dorset Council (£331,500) as part of their nitrate offsetting schemes, £597,000 from the Helen Brotherton Endowment Fund and £152,000 from restricted reserve acquisition funds. The acquisition costs have been allocated to Heritage assets (£3.13m) and Fixed assets (£730,000).</p> <p>DWT ended the year with a healthy level of net current assets of £1.14m.</p> <p>Q (WP) – Can an edited, simplified version of the financial statements be produced? A – A summary of the statement is produced in the magazine on a yearly basis, but this will be reviewed to provide a little more detail.</p>
5.	<p><u>Resolutions</u></p> <p>Special Resolution</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. THAT the annual audited accounts and reports for the financial year ended 31 March 2022 be received. Proposed by Anne Wheatcroft, seconded by Giles Pugh and accepted <i>nem.con</i>. <p>Special Resolution</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. THAT the new auditors Moore South LLP be appointed for the coming year. Proposed by Roger Coles, seconded by Simon Goldsack and accepted <i>nem.con</i> <p>Ordinary Resolution</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. To authorize the remuneration of the auditors. Proposed by Jo Davies, seconded by Tony Bates and accepted <i>nem.con</i>. <p>Ordinary Resolution</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. THAT those persons standing for election as trustees, Jo Davies, Simon Goldsack, Mark Kibblewhite, Gail Ninnim, Isla Reynolds and John Stobart are duly elected and appointed, to take effect from the end of the AGM. Proposed by Jeremy Thomas, seconded by Jim White and accepted <i>nem.con</i>. <p>MK thanked all the trustees and other volunteers, who give up their time to support DWT.</p>
6.	<p><u>Dorset Wildlife Trust: Review of the last year - Brian Bleese, Chief Executive</u></p> <p>Brian thanked members for attending and encouraged them to talk to the staff and to see the work being carried out. He thanked the trustees and staff for their support over the past few difficult pandemic years.</p>

The agreed DWT strategy focuses on three areas

1. Nature's recovery - creating a wilder Dorset with 30% of land and seas managed for nature by 2030
2. Standing up for Nature
3. Reconnecting people and Nature - 1 in 4 people taking action for Nature by 2030.

DWT has 40 nature reserves which are at the core of our purpose and activities. They are supported by a hard-working team, with some excellent outcomes this year. We have also worked with 148 farmers and landowners, representing 5% of Dorset's land area, to create new habitats, such as orchards, ponds, and hedgerows. Work on rivers and wetlands has resulted in increased species' numbers being recorded. Meanwhile, our beaver project has been very successful, and alongside this and with our support, the number of beavers on private land in Dorset is increasing.

Many of the outstanding marine areas around Dorset are designated Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), potentially contributing to the 30% by 2030 target, and survey work is ongoing to record species diversity, abundance and locations.

People engagement is going well. Although member numbers have fallen somewhat, this has been less than was anticipated as a result of the cost-of-living crisis, and 2,143 new members have joined. Much effort was put into membership engagement during the pandemic, and this has helped membership retention. A continuing challenge for the future is to increase member numbers further.

More than 100,000 people visited our Coastal Centres this year, and the Kingcombe Visitor Centre has been re-vitalised. We currently have 600 volunteers, working at Visitor Centres, nature reserves, and in our offices. Their contribution is vital, and we hope to increase the number of volunteers.

A major Countryside Stewardship funded heathland habitat restoration and woodland management project has been completed on Brownsea Island, and work on a new visitor facility project will start in February 2023.

After 11 years, the National Heritage Lottery funded Wild Paths Trainee Program has come to an end, with a total of 110 trainees having gone through the program. This program started at DWT and then was extended to four other Wildlife Trusts in the South-West, becoming an exemplar scheme. The Chief Executive thanked all those involved in this successful initiative.

The Wild Woodbury project has started well. Re-wetting land by re-profiling and drainage disruption has been completed. Baseline and subsequent surveys have already recorded an increase in the number of bird and animal species present.

DWT is prioritising equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI), with an active EDI team. It is critical to be as accessible as possible to all communities and to embed EDI in all our activities.

The Chief Executive closed by noting that organisational momentum is high with staff determined to make a difference for Nature. He said that he is extremely proud of and thankful to all the staff, trustees, and volunteers.

	<p><u>Questions</u></p> <p>Q (TB) – How has the change of the logo gone down? A - The change of logo and the reasoning for this was communicated widely; there was very little negative response, including from the farming community.</p> <p>Q (WP) – Are the statistics of 30% of land and seas managed for nature by 2030 national or just for Dorset? Please can you explain the Dorset land and sea 5% statistic. We are far from the 30%, can it be achieved? A – The 30% is for both a national and regional aim. 30% is to be achieved not just by increased nature reserves; for example, if land is farmed in an appropriate way which enhances nature, it can be included in the 30%, as can parks, gardens, and open spaces that are managed sympathetically for nature. DWT does not intend to manage the whole 30% land area itself, but to be liaising, advising, and supporting others.</p>
7.	<p><u>Moving Forward – Mark Kibblewhite Chair of Trustees</u></p> <p>Climate change is affecting the whole world. For example, the April air temperature at Herne has already risen by 1°C over the last 20 years; this increasing temperature is extending the growing season and affecting local biodiversity. Meanwhile human communities are being and will increasingly be seriously challenged by global warming. And alongside climate change, there is an ecological emergency generally, including in Dorset, caused by habitat loss and degradation.</p> <p>DWT is positioned well to deal with this emergency and has a responsibility to provide leadership. We have a matching strategy in place, with clear descriptions of what we need to do, including working with the wider Wildlife Trusts’ Federation. However, we are constrained by resources as it is essential to avoid overburdening staff or becoming too extended financially.</p> <p>The critical issue is that we cannot make the progress that is needed without more resources. Our ambition and purposes exceed the current capacity. We are using our current resources well and we are making progress but more needs to be done. To aid this, trustees need to develop and support an empowering inclusive style.</p> <p>Key tasks to increase the scale and efficient use of resources include the following.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Maximise our resources by engaging with our members and reaching all demographics, with the volunteer program being especially important. 2. Make more and more meaningful partnerships with sponsors. 3. Seek out and secure income from Natural Capital initiatives. 4. Focus on peoples’ development, improving equality and empowerment, investing in our people (doubling the training budget has been a good step forwards). 5. Become more efficient by using innovative technology, resetting our office infrastructure, and reducing our carbon footprint. 6. Work positively with the Wildlife Trusts’ Federation and enhance links with other neighbouring Wildlife Trusts.

	<p>To summarize, DWT is achieving much, but the pace at which we are doing so needs to be increased. We need to increase our resources and equip staff to do their work in the most effective and efficient way.</p> <p>The Chief Executive added that a priority is to transform and build upon our digital footprint.</p>
8.	<p><u>Any other business</u></p> <p>None</p>

Meeting Closed at 12.16