



## **DORSET WILDLIFE TRUST**

### **58th Annual General Meeting**

**11:00am, Monday 2 December 2019 at the headquarters, Brooklands Farm, Forston**

#### **Minutes**

**1. Apologies.** DWT Chair Jo Davies (JD) took the Chair, introduced those sitting at the top table, Sue Patterson (SP) DWT Director of Finance & Resources and Brian Bleese (BB) Acting Chief Executive, then welcomed those present to the headquarters of Dorset Wildlife Trust at Brooklands Farm and read out an apology for absence from Trustees Giles Pugh and Jim White, Vice President Barry Welch and Hilly Chittenden.

**2.** There were no declarations of interest.

#### **3. Approval of the Minutes of the last AGM**

The minutes were approved for 57<sup>th</sup> AGM held on 27th November 2018.

*Proposed by JG John Gaye seconded by TB Tony Bates and accepted nem. con.*

#### **4. Commentary on the Financial Statement**

SP informed attendees that the full financial statements are available on the DWT website; hard copies are available on request as DWT are trying to save paper. SP commented on the key figures on the audited Financial Statements for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019. These have previously been approved by DWT Council.

Financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the Charity Commission Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) on Accounting and Reporting by charities and in accordance with Financial reporting Standard 102 (FRS102). There is a difference in the layout as FRS102 now requires comparatives for all figures in the accounts,

Dorset Wildlife Trust made an overall deficit of £270,000; unrestricted funds have a deficit of £287,000 which is a real concern. DWT budgets to break-even but this includes drawing down on previously designated unrestricted funds. The budget for 2018/19 included a drawdown of £24,000 from unrestricted designated funds. This year DWT had both additional costs and a shortfall in budgeted income: legacy income was £157,000 short of budget and there were additional membership recruitment costs of £51,000 and fencing costs of £32,000 drawn down from designated funds. The deficit also includes re-organisation costs of £49,000 which arose due to actions taken to address the shortfall in income and reduce the risk in the future budgets. Restricted funds had a deficit of £48,000. Restricted funds are received by way of donations, legacies or grants that are restricted by the donor/funder for specific purposes and therefore not available for general use and are accounted for separately. During the year DWT budgeted to drawdown £319,000 from restricted funds previously received. DWT also received £220,000 income for future years and there was an underspend on at least one project of £30,000.

There was an endowment fund surplus of £65,000. The endowment fund is made up of two capital funds received from legacies. The capital must be maintained but the income can be utilised each year to fund charitable activities. The surplus has been created by investment gains of £12,000 and the repayment of £35,000 loan.



Incoming resources totalled £3,342,000 which was down on the prior year by £99,000. The bulk of income comes from Membership subscriptions £1,035,000 which are all unrestricted, restricted grant income £1,007,000 and legacies £362,000 of which all unrestricted save for £47,000 of restricted legacy. Other income sources are Primary trading £253,000 which includes education, conservation, farm income and reserves income. Other trading income £270,000 includes retail, facilities and resource hire, rental income, raffle and sponsorship. Investment income £67,000 and other (insurance claim and renewables).

The most significant movements are: Legacy income down by £233,000, grants up by £73,000, donations up by £71,000 and membership up by £52,000.

75% of DWT's expenditure were spent on charitable aims; Nature reserve management £797,000, Living landscape and seas £1,350,000 and Policy, advocacy and evidence £535,000. 14% (£517,000) of total expenditure was spent on membership servicing and recruitment. 11% (£388,000) of total expenditure was spent on raising donations, legacies and trading (£113,000) and investment returns. Total expenditure is £3,615,000 which was up on the prior year by £95,000 due to the reasons mentioned previously (£49,000 re-organisation costs and membership recruitment costs of £51,000).

The balance sheet analysis shows the asset and liability composition. DWT has £10,558,000 net assets at the 31 March 2019; of this £6,933,000 (67%) are fixed assets in the form of tangible assets and heritage assets. An fund analysis of net assets was given. This demonstrates how the net assets of £10,558,000 are allocated between unrestricted, designated, restricted and endowment funds. Endowment funds totalled £1,203,000 of which £1,082,000 is held as investments most of which is managed by Close Asset Management Limited and £82,000 cash is held by investment manager and £23,000 as cash. Restricted funds totalled £5,457,000 of which £3,854,000 are Heritage assets (Nature Reserves), £939,000 are operating tangible fixed assets, £21,000 investments and £643,000 net current assets such as bank balances, debtors and creditors. Designated funds totalled £398,000, these include £120,000 Brexit planning, £10,000 strategic refocusing, Fencing programme £47,000, water infrastructure £36,000 and Brownsea development £50,000. Unrestricted funds totalled £3,500,000 of which £1,300,000 are fixed assets and £815,000 are heritage assets, £1,380,000 of investments and net current assets.

Free reserves are part of a charity's unrestricted funds that are freely available to spend on any of the charity's purposes. The Charity Commission requires all charities to include a statement of their reserves policy in the annual report. This policy is reviewed annually by the Finance and Property Panel. The review considers future funding needs of strategic plans, risk assessments of funding streams etc. It is part of the financial management and forward financial planning of the charity. The process should provide financial resilience and give confidence to stakeholders such as members, grant funders, donors etc that the charity's finances are being properly managed. DWT's current policy states that free reserves held by the charity should not normally fall below six months of total unrestricted costs. At 31 March 2019 the free reserves represented approximately six months of budgeted unrestricted costs.

Michael Evans asked what the most useful amount of legacy is to leave DWT in a will. AC said that the most valuable to DWT is to leave a percentage of a residual estate. SP said that family should come first. Legacies can be anything between £500 - £1,000,000. The current year's legacy income notified to date of £260,000 was made up from 14/15 legacies. 50% of legacies are from non-members.

Peter Scupholme asked how the deficits were being financed. Last year the deficit was mainly restricted. The unrestricted deficits are being funded from free reserves. DWT identified the shortfall in legacy income combined with the additional membership recruitment costs at the half year point and subsequently worked on plans to restructure the charity to reduce ongoing costs and reduce the reliance on legacy income.

Previously legacy income had been a reliable source of income and the 2018/19 year was the first year that the income stream had dropped significantly. The budget for 2019/20 has a reduced legacy income of £370,000 to reduce the risk in the budget.

Further questions can be directed to Sue Patterson.

JD added that the Finance Panel drill down on the accounts. JD thanked SP for all her work in preparing the management accounts and financial statements.

## **5. Resolutions**

JD took the meeting through the following resolutions.

### **Special Resolution**

1. THAT the annual audited accounts and reports for the financial year ended 31 March 2019 be received

*Proposed by Alastair Cook seconded by John Gaye and accepted nem. con.*

2. THAT the auditors be appointed for the coming year.

DWT conducted a tender process to look at alternative auditors. The Board have decided on Smith & Williamson and propose that they are appointed for the coming year.

*Proposed by Steve Davis seconded by Kelyn Derrick and accepted nem. con.*

### **Ordinary Resolution**

3. To authorise the remuneration of the auditors.

*Proposed by John McDavid seconded by Anne Wheatcroft and accepted nem. con.*

### **Ordinary Resolution**

4. THAT those persons standing for election as trustees are duly elected and appointed, to take effect from the end of this AGM.

Jo Davies

*Accepted nem com.*

Tony Bates

*Accepted nem com.*

Jeremy Thomas

*Accepted nem com.*

Mark Kibblewhite

*Accepted nem com.*

Alick Simmons

*Accepted nem com.*

Isla Reynolds

*Accepted nem com.*

## 5. Chairman's review of the past year

JD reported that 2018/2019 has been a year of ups and some downs. The good news is that DWT's Membership, thanks to SWWFL, so ably led by Alistair Cook and his team, is holding up well with over 25,000 individuals and for the first-time surpassing £1,000,000 of membership income. DWT have engaged in an extensive marketing review which has highlighted that this is their most important fundraising area along with grant income which has also been successful. However, Trustees and Management understand that in the changing external circumstances that DWT are in, all funding sources are becoming increasingly difficult. DWT are thrilled that Isla Reynolds has joined the Trustee Board with a huge depth of marketing skill. A huge amount of work was put into the move to a new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) database. This will improve DWT's supporter care. DWT have been operating in the last year of their Strategic Plan with 5 strategic aims including restoring, reconnecting, and recreating habitats and promoting awareness and sustainable living. The new Strategic Plan is currently being evolved and the Board are looking hard at concentrating on sustainable living to try and avoid compromising the environment for future generations more than it already is. TWWT, is the parent body. It has, over the past year, done some good lobbying work with Government especially when Michael Gove was in office at the Department for Environment, Food and Agricultural Affairs, on what can replace European grant monies and there is an Environment Bill and Agriculture Bill in the pipeline. TWWT will continue to work hard on getting these through. There is a great opportunity, possibly more than at any other time, of working more closely with the farming community. Some exciting and interesting ideas are emerging like rewilding and DWT are working with their many partnerships to be well placed to take advantage of new initiatives. Meanwhile DWT continues the invaluable, core work, to maintain their reserves and SNCIs. In total, 76 landowners have received conservation advice in the last year and more than 81 SSSI owners, covering 696ha of land. DWT's big campaign success has been Get Dorset Buzzing, which was launched in March by DWT's president, George McGavin. By the end of that month DWT had exceeded their initial target of 1,000 sign ups achieving over 2,000. This came at an appropriate time with the recent reports of insect decline. The Wild Brownsea project has taken a lot of work to finalise exciting plans for a new visitor centre on Brownsea and refurbishment of the Villa. Matched funding has been secured of £550,000 for The National Lottery Heritage Fund bid.

The not so good news for the year was the decrease in legacy income. This has become a worrying trend and resulted in a drawdown of some reserves. Last Christmas an unfortunate decision was made that some redundancies would have to take place. Inevitably this has led to a decline in staff morale, of which Trustees are well aware and are making every effort to restore. There has been an overhaul of DWT's governance procedures during the year, resulting in a review of committee structures to make DWT more streamlined and efficient. These will now be adopted in the New Year. An external Board Review was also carried out resulting in useful observations on the way we work. DWT's Centres continue to be vibrant with over 70,000 visitors to Chesil Centre with 800 pupils from 17 different schools coming for an educational visit. The beach cleans at Chesil were well attended with 150 people turning up for the Great British Clean. Over the year 400 volunteers collected one ton of rubbish. Kingcombe Centre hosted 52 day and residential courses. Kingcombe also hosted a visit by the DEFRA team head by Julien Glover reviewing designated landscapes. The ensuing report indicating the possibility in the future of creating a Dorset National Park. Lorton hosted BBC Countryfile and Kimmeridge Centre underwent a welcome refurbishment.

JD concluded by looking at a few natural world successes which of course is DWT's core business. 1698 green winged orchids at Corfe Mullen Meadows. 14 bats, of 7 different species, caught in one night at Kilwood. 29 species of butterfly recorded at Fontmell Down. 150 sandwich and 178 common terns fledged on Brownsea – the highest rate for over 30 years. On Upton Heath, 115 marsh gentian and 167 silver-studded blues were counted.

JD conveyed a huge thank you to all of Dorset Wildlife Trust's dedicated staff, for their hard work and also to the Trustees who have given JD invaluable support over the year.

DWT are saying goodbye to John Raymond who has given many years of wisdom on legal matters on the Board – John we will miss you.

## 6. Chief Executive's look at the coming year

In the nearly 22 years that he has worked for DWT there has rarely been a day when he didn't wake up with a sense of excitement about working for DWT and a sense of inspiration that is provided by a wonderful staff team, a dedicated board of Trustees led by Jo Davis and an army of members and volunteers whose enthusiasm for the cause is as infectious as it is inspiring. Working in nature conservation is exciting, challenging, at times frustrating but never dull and it is always rewarding. Dorset Wildlife Trust is operating in a world full of uncertainties, there a general election very soon, the main political parties seem to be engaged in a bidding war about how much money they are going to spend and interestingly how many trees they are going to plant, they may be somewhat misguided in their approach but at least there is an acknowledgement of the climate and ecological problem. Waiting in the wings is what seems to be a well thought out and positive Environment Bill and all of the main political parties seem to be saying the right things about the environment. It remains to be seen if our politicians keep their promises on the environment, they must continue to be challenged locally and nationally through The Wildlife Trust national office. The economic and funding environment is also very uncertain and if DWT are to succeed in maintaining the breadth and quality of work going forward, they are going to have to be flexible and adaptable and ready to respond to a changing political and economic environment. The climate and ecological crisis that we now face has the potential to change the world beyond recognition. This is a global crisis the effects of which are now being felt locally. There are two new councils in Dorset both of which have declared a climate emergency and we will be seeking to influence the new local plans as they are developed.

There have been two very significant publications this year, The UK State of Nature Report and the SWWT report on insect decline. Both highlight the massive ecological crisis that is facing the UK, one that is reflected around the world. The reports identify major declines in species abundance and far too many species that are at threat of extinction from the UK. While Dorset may be a wonderful county for wildlife it has not been immune to this crisis. 20% of Dorset bee species have been lost and four species of butterfly. DWT has been fighting extinction for many years and it is now clear that our work is more important than ever. DWT are about practical conservation and influence, working with partners and communities. The phrase 'think globally, act locally' was coined at the Rio Summit in 1992. DWT must engage with the groundswell of concern and anger and enable people who are obviously 'thinking globally' to 'act locally' and work with us to make Dorset an even better place for wildlife and for people. Ash die-back disease will also become a major issue over the coming year, one which will have significant ecological and resource implications. DWT are currently investigating the potential impact of this disease on our nature reserves.

DWT will continue to provide opportunities for people to make a difference. Through projects such as Urban Green, Gillingham Royal Forest and Wild Paths all of which are about getting people in contact with nature. Our trainee scheme that has so far enabled over 100 people to get started on a career in nature conservation. It continues to bring new talent and diversity into the conservation workforce. We have a suite of new marine protected areas along the Dorset coast and these provide a fantastic opportunity to conserve and enhance our marine environment. DWT provides countless other opportunities for people to get involved through managing our nature reserves, wildlife surveying and monitoring and through vital support in fundraising and marketing, education and even answering the phone. Every volunteer contributes to our shared cause.

Delivery of the Wild Brownsea project, supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the Fine Foundation and others, has started and you will start to see a transformation of access, engagement and volunteering for Brownsea Island.

Hopefully next year we will see Beavers return to Dorset for the first time in nearly 100 years.

With a note of sadness, BB announced that DWT are saying farewell to Alastair Cook, an outstanding Director of Fundraising and Marketing, who will be leaving us in February. BB acknowledged the huge contribution that Alastair has made to the development of DWT over the past 15 years. His amazing work in growing our membership and supporter base has provided DWT with the sound base from which we can meet the uncertainties, challenges and opportunities that DWT now face.

JD thanked BB for his good and positive report.

Brian thanked Jo Davies for her address to the meeting and her continued support of DWT.

## 7. Any Other Business

Hilary R Chittenden (Mrs) asked "I appreciate the Trust's financial constraints, but I am very concerned about the reduction in DWT staff time available to scrutinise planning applications and subsequent compliance with planning conditions. East Dorset Environment Partnership does what it can, looking in detail at environmental impacts of all major applications in the East Dorset area including "amenity planting" that could have adverse impact on the wider countryside but we need similar work across the County, drawing on local knowledge and expertise.

May I urge you to reconsider this particularly as DWT prepares its new Strategic Plan and we start to look at the Council's Options Consultation for the county wide Local Plan."

ID replied that DWT are extremely grateful for the support that the East Dorset Environment Planning group, and Hilary in particular, have given to environmental issues over the years, and their input on planning applications and local plans, which is invaluable. And have taken her concerns very seriously.

In May 2019, our manager who has been leading on planning, Sharron Abbott, retired, and DWT therefore lost a wealth of experience and Dorset knowledge with her which cannot be replaced.

DWT considers that having an effective influence on land-use decisions in Dorset is a crucial role that they play, and indeed this aspect of work recently came highest in a member survey as to what members feel DWT should be doing. It is though in the nature of work on planning that there is always more that could be done than resources allow and have long had to ensure a balance between what might be ideal and what can be afforded.

It was Sharron's choice to leave at that time, and not a change that DWT would have made for financial reasons. A new member of staff was recruited, who has recently started and is leading on our planning work. This member of staff, Leanne Butt, will be Hilary's main contact on planning responses in the east of the county; this is a slight change from the previous situation where an officer in the East team spent one day a week on planning responses, in support of Sharron, but our new officer is full time in comparison to Sharron being part-time. ID is spending more of her time on land-use planning work than previous, to support our new officer as she gains knowledge of Dorset. DWT do not feel that they have reduced the staff time overall. Nevertheless, fully appreciate, that in East Dorset there could be a perception that this is the case, and will continue to work with the EDEP group, who DWT hope will in time be re-assured in this matter over time.

AP added his thanks for the many volunteers that help.

There were no more questions.

The meeting closed at 12:01

## Annex I: Attendees

Alastair Cook  
Alick Simmons  
Tony Bates  
John Raymond  
Jeremy Thomas  
Susan Patterson

Anne Wheatcroft  
Jo Davies  
Andrew Pollard  
Mark Kibblewhite  
Steve Davis  
Brian Bleese





John Gaye  
Michael Evans  
Pat Fry  
Jeremy Powne  
Alison Kaye  
Laura McLellan  
Ann Trathen  
L A Long

Kelvyn Derrick  
Nigel Webb  
Imogen davenport  
Peter Scupholme  
John McDavid  
James Haldane  
Isla Reynolds  
J E Durran

