

Minutes of 63rd Annual General Meeting

Dorset Wildlife Trust

Monday 2nd December 2024 – 11 am – 12.20pm
Brooklands Farm

<u>In Attendance</u>		<u>Apologies</u>
Mark Kibblewhite (Chair) (MK)	John Gaye (JG)	Roger Cole (RC)
Andrew Pollard (AP)	John Stobart (JS)	Tony Bates (TB)
Anne Wheatcroft (AW)	Leo Henley-Lock (LHL)	
Brian Bleese (BB)	Lisbet Sherlock (LS)	
Giles Pugh (GP)	Nigel Webb (NW)	
Ian Alexander (IA)	Sara Thompson (ST)	
Imogen Davenport (ID)	Sue Patterson (SP)	
Isla Reynolds (IR)	Simon Goldsack (SG)	
Jim White (JW)	Will Parker (WP)	
Jo Davies (JD)	Sarah Pritchard (minutes)	

<u>Minutes of Annual General Meeting</u>	
The Chair of Trustees, Mark Kibblewhite, welcomed those in attendance at the 63 rd annual meeting of the Dorset Wildlife Trust (DWT).	
1.	<u>Apologies</u> Noted and accepted, listed above.
2.	<u>Declarations of interest</u> None
3.	<u>Approval of the minutes of the last AGM</u> The minutes of the 62 nd AGM held on 4 th December 2023 were approved. Proposed by SG, seconded by AW and accepted <i>nem.con</i> .
4.	<u>Commentary on Financial Statements</u> Director of Finance (SP) presented the consolidated results and balance sheet for Dorset Wildlife Trust and its trading subsidiary for the year ended 31 March 2024, which were approved by the Trustees at the 343 rd Council meeting on 2 nd September 2024. <i>Figures are extracted from financial statements which were prepared in accordance with Charity Commission (CC) statement of recommended practice (SORP) and audited by Moore South LLP.</i> <i>Dorset Wildlife Trust has had a very successful year with three land acquisitions which resulted in an overall surplus of £8.5m. Restricted capital grants and donations totalling £8.3m are accountable for much of this surplus.</i> <i>Dorset Wildlife Trust continues to exclude legacy income from its budget due to its unpredictability and to restrict drawdowns from free reserves towards future budgeted activities in order to maintain sufficient free reserves for the stability of the charity. This has allowed us to invest more of our ongoing free reserves to try to protect funds from inflationary pressures whilst maintaining sufficient working capital to service ongoing activities.</i>

	<i>The unrestricted fund is showing a deficit of £167k for the year. The budgeted drawdown from free reserves was £680k and £204k from the designated funds but due to legacy income of £1.04m the final drawdown was reduced to £167k.</i> <i>Our total income for 2023/24 totalled £12.694m, with £9.63m restricted and £3.05m unrestricted.</i> <i>Total revenue expenditure was £4.358m, 75% of which was used on charitable spend.</i> <i>Free reserves of £2.86m at March 2024 represented approximately 6 months of total budgeted annual costs, in line with our policy statement that meets Charity Commission requirements.</i> Q. When assets (land) have gone up by £1m, if this was a business we would be looking at generating capital return. As a charity, how do we measure a return on that land? A. The measure of success would be to restore habitats and significantly increase biodiversity. In terms of income generation most land is put into agri-environmental agreements. Q. Is there ever a need from Charity Commission to value the land? What if we want to move it on? Land on the balance sheet is at the price we paid, if land was to sell, we would have a profit. A. In terms of statutory accounting, only investment land and buildings are required to be included at market value. Dorset Wildlife Trust does not revalue heritage assets or other land and buildings due to the costs involved in valuing assets every year. The majority of heritage assets were acquired through restricted capital grants or donations with restrictions on disposal. Suggested to have a further discussion. MK thanked SP for an excellent delivery.
5.	<u>Resolutions</u> 1. THAT the annual audited accounts and reports for the financial year ended 31 March 2024 be received. Proposed by GP, seconded by AW and accepted <i>nem.con</i> 2. THAT the auditors (Moore South LLP) be appointed for the coming year. Proposed by SG, seconded by JD and accepted <i>nem.con</i> 3. To authorise the remuneration of the auditors. Proposed by JG, seconded by IR and accepted <i>nem.con</i> 4. THAT those persons standing for election as trustees, Jo Davies, Anne Wheatcroft, Jim White, Andy Littler, Richard Hulf and Phil Sterling are duly elected and appointed, to take effect from the end of the AGM. John Gaye is stepping down and is almost our longest standing trustee, and Council will miss his advice and knowledge on the County. Thank you for your service. Isla Reynolds is stepping down and has helped F&M team by supporting the director. Her persuasive style has helped everyone. Thank you for your service. Gail Ninnim unfortunately resigned due to a serious illness. Thank you and we wish you a speedy recovery.

	Some trustees have completed over 9 years of service and have come to the end of their current 3 year term. In accordance with Council policy on re-appointment of trustees, the Chair requests that the following continue as trustees for one further year. 1. Jo Davis is currently Vice Chair and a valued support and advisor to the Chair. 2. Anne Wheatcroft is no longer Chair of Finance and Resources Committee but has a deep knowledge of the Trust's finances. 3. Jim White is Chair of Conservation Committee and should continue in that role. Three new Trustees to be appointed – Andy Littler, Richard Hulf, Phil Sterling. Proposed by Mark Kibblewhite, seconded by Simon Goldsack and accepted <i>nem.com</i> MK thanked all trustees for their support to the Trust.
6.	<u>Dorset Wildlife Trust: Review of the last year - Brian Bleese, Chief Executive</u> BB opened by reminding everyone of the agreed mission of Dorset Wildlife Trust: <i>Create a Wilder Dorset by 2030 - a Dorset rich in wildlife, valued and nurtured by everyone will help safeguard our natural world for future generations and enable people to live healthier and more fulfilling lives.</i> <i>Making space for nature in our landscapes, in our lives, engaging people, making people part of the solution as well is where we focus our work. And to do that, of course, we need to be a resilient and effective organization; effectively fundraise and effectively engage society and the community. So, people are as important as wildlife in this mission and enabling people, ultimately, I think our fundamental belief is that a world rich in wildlife, rich in wild spaces is one that's also good for people.</i> <i>This is a look back over 2023-24 and I thought it would be nice to take a whistle stop tour of some of the amazing things we've done over the past year.</i> <i>In our strategy, 2021 we set ourselves a goal of increasing the land we manage for nature by 15% by 2030. And we're now very much on target to meet this by the end of 2024. We've had very short notice sometimes to make them happen and Council responded incredibly quickly. I think it's a demonstration of our maturity as an organisation that we can make things happen quickly. Land purchases included Lyscombe, Land at West Holme, expanding our land at Kingcombe NNR. We have also just completed on the purchase of an extension to Tadnoll reserve.</i> <i>So a big question in our light-touch strategy review is do we set up another target for 2030? We will have a couple of workshops on this question after Christmas and look at some of our targets.</i> <i>Our trainee program has run since 2011 when Steve Davis and I started this program with funding for the National Lottery Heritage Fund for the Skills for the Future program.</i> <i>In that time I think there has been over 120 trainees to go through our trainee programs. The Wild Brownsea project now has a trainee and future projects we're developing at the moment will also have trainee opportunities in them.</i> <i>Magnox particularly, our neighbours at Winfrith and Tadnoll have funded traineeships, along with private donors for traineeships.</i> <i>There is no doubt we are in an ecological crisis and with the decline of one in forty species in</i>

	<i>Dorset no longer present, we've been running the Species Recovery program. Andrew Pollard, Director of Nature Recovery, has been delivering this over the past two years. We picked ten species that are threatened or at risk over 11 sites. We are pleased to report that every one of those species chosen has either extended its range or improved its population which is fantastic. Also in our marine environment, we're now looking at some really interesting new acoustic monitoring systems that Peter Tinsley has been testing. Peter likes us to be on the technological edge of monitoring within the marine environment.</i> <i>Porpoise pits, where they snuffle into the sediment to find food, has been spotted in a number of places on the Dorset Coast, but porpoises are very rarely seen. Bottlenose Dolphins are seen much more regularly, so finding evidence that porpoises are present as well is excellent.</i> <i>We completed the purchase of Wild Woodbury in 2021 and since then it's just gone from strength to strength in terms of species on the site. There were three singing Skylarks in the first year, with close to 80 last year. So hopefully we will start to see the same thing happen over the next two to three years at Lyscombe too.</i> <i>We have done a number of engagement projects this year including the Next Door Nature Project which was a national project for which The Wildlife Trusts got funding and we've done some great work there, leading them online and offline, in person, engaging people at so many levels.</i> <i>The Peat Project, is one I am really proud of and again it shows where we are as an organisation. It has been a diverse and challenging partnership at times, Grace Hervey has done an amazing job bringing it all together in a relatively short timeline.</i> <i>The SNCI program is an amazing way of reaching and engaging with approximately 900 landowners in England and 1,300 sites across Dorset. This is something that can have an immensely positive impact then on establishing the recovery networks across Dorset.</i> <i>Marine is as much an important part of our work as anything else of course and for 10 years we have been monitoring seals along the Dorset coast. We are receiving more seal sightings reports than ever before.</i> <i>The fundraising and marketing team has done an amazing job of keeping membership numbers up and our lapse rate is low. We have maintained our membership around the 27,000 mark. A big thank you to the people who gave up time to volunteer for us over the last year. We have seen that at Wild Woodbury we have lots of local community volunteers coming in to help with all sorts of things; monitoring, managing the land, removing fences, all those sorts of things. We couldn't do half of what we do without our volunteers.</i> Q. 30% of land has been managed in Dorset by 2030. What is the current figure? A. The estimate from 2021 was 6%. The 30% target is an international target that the UK government is signed up to. Originally the government thought they could include all areas including natural landscapes, but that is not the case, so although it is big target, we are going to do our best. A copy of the annual review is available online.
7.	<u>Dorset Wildlife Trust: strategy, challenges and opportunities – Mark Kibblewhite Chair of Trustees</u> <i>Society is in a downward spiral—locally, nationally, and globally—due to weak economic conditions and political expediency. Environmental degradation is worsening because governments are cutting back on green investments and regulations in favour of short-term economic relief. This leads to higher long-term costs and further degradation. The solution starts with citizens and communities. There's a need to improve nature literacy—public</i>

	<i>understanding of nature's value to wellbeing and the economy. This awareness can influence political will, leading to better environmental policies and investments, creating a virtuous cycle instead of a downward spiral.</i> <i>The Trust has reaffirmed its commitment to achieving net zero emissions by 2030. There is a strong emphasis on accelerating efforts over the next 2–3 years, including implementing concrete and potentially challenging actions. Discussions include extending the current policy of excluding certain investments to explore proactive investment strategies that use the Trust's financial resources to support positive environmental and social outcomes.</i> <i>The Trust is actively involved in several Environmental Land Management Schemes (ELMS) and landscape recovery initiatives. Key collaborations include RSPB, National Trust, and Dorset National Landscape. Projects span areas such as River Allen, Brit Valley, Portland, and South Dorset. Staff are significantly engaged, with some seconded into these programs. Local partnerships are key to further progress towards making Dorset rich in Wildlife.</i> <i>Trustees expressed gratitude to the staff and directors for their exceptional work and dedication. Acknowledgement was given to outgoing and incoming trustees. The importance of maintaining a member-focused approach was reiterated.</i>
8.	<u>Any other business</u> None

The meeting concluded with appreciation for the collective efforts of the team and a reminder of the Trust's mission to serve its members and the environment.