



**Worcestershire**  
Wildlife Trust

## **Minutes of the 2024 Annual General Meeting held at Lower Smite Farm on Wednesday 16th October 2024**

Trust Chair Christianne Tipping introduced the meeting.

37 members attended with no proxy votes requested.

### **1. Apologies**

Apologies were received from Linda Butler, Tessa Carrick, Richard Cory, Harry Green, Peter and Jane Scriven, Geoff Trevis.

### **2. Approval of the Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 11th October 2023**

The minutes had been previously circulated through the Trust website. Approval was proposed by Peter Holmes, seconded by Sandra Young and agreed unanimously; the minutes will be signed by the Chair.

### **3. Matters arising from the Minutes**

There were no matters arising.

### **4. To receive and adopt the Report of Council**

The Report had been previously circulated. Providing a summary of the highlights, Christianne Tipping began by drawing attention to work on our nature reserves, a core element of our conservation strategy; the Trust owns almost 3000 acres (1200 hectares) spread across more than 80 sites across the county with practical work led by our excellent team of Reserves Officers. During the report period, a great deal of work was undertaken to secure land adjacent to existing nature reserves in line with our approach of 'Bigger, Better, More Joined Up'; that work is coming to fruition this year.

The Trust also works with farmers and landowners, with our advisory team now influencing the management of 100,000 acres (40,000 ha.), a quarter of the county. Much of this work is delivered through partnerships: water environment projects with Severn Trent, Natural Networks with Worcestershire County Council, and Severn Treescapes with Gloucestershire and Herefordshire Wildlife Trusts.

Influencing development through engagement with the planning system is another essential strand of work, with the Trust continuing to provide specialist input into policy and local plans alongside selective input into planning casework.

To complement our conservation strategy, the engagement team provides opportunities for adults and children to experience wildlife and the environment, reaching over 4000

children through our schools programme. Work continues to build links with communities next to recently acquired reserves, as well as projects with youth and community organisations in more urban areas.

The Trust also continued to make good progress towards meeting its strategic commitments to increase diversity across all areas of its work and to be at least carbon neutral by 2030.

Giving by members is fundamental to the financing and delivery of operations. Membership numbers remained steady at 21,000, with our members generously contributing via subscriptions, donations and legacies; members are also the single biggest source of our over 500 volunteers who give more than 50,000 hours of time equating to c.£600,000 of labour.

Other fundraising for capital and major projects included grants from landfill operators, charitable trusts and the National Lottery Heritage Fund to all of whom we are grateful; we continue to enjoy a high success rate with bids despite having only a small fund-raising team.

Since the end of the financial year covered by the report, our efforts to defend Tiddesley Wood have continued; the proposed development goes to public enquiry in November. Our appeal to expand Hanley Dingle reserve has now launched with c.£82,000 raised so far, and we have secured c.110 acres adjacent to Trench Wood thanks to the Esmée Fairbairn loan scheme. We also launched our three-year Wilder Worcestershire – Neighbourhoods Nurturing Nature project which is supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and will see us working with community and youth groups across the River Salwarpe to River Severn corridor.

Our long-standing director Colin Raven will be stepping down at the end of the year and we are pleased to have appointed Mike Perry, currently Head of Resources, as Colin's successor.

Adoption of the Report was proposed by Mervyn Needham, seconded by Lyndon Bracewell and agreed unanimously.

## **5. To receive and adopt the Report of the Honorary Treasurer**

The Report had been previously circulated. The Honorary Treasurer, John Blakiston, gave members an overview of the Trust's financial control framework including annual budgeting with quarterly accounts, reviews and management reports. He explained that day-to-day running costs and reserve management expenditure are met from revenue income, while specific projects are financed from a designated capital fund. The Trust also has a dedicated committee which regularly reviews the performance of our investments. Turning to the figures for the year ended 31st March 2024, income was £2.55M with legacies of £354k compared to £225k in 2023, while expenditure was £2.556M. This resulted in a surplus of £120k after addition of £126k gains on investments. Net assets stood at £17.757M, chiefly the nature reserves as well as investments of £3.382M. John considered that the Trust remained in a fit state with continuing conservative financial control.

Adoption of the Report was proposed by Carrie Pawley, seconded by Tom Meikle and agreed unanimously. [A full copy of the accounts with auditor's statement will be published on the Trust's website.]

## **6. To elect Members of Council**

Five Trustees retired by rotation and were re-elected with individual votes:

Andrew Forecast, proposed by Tom Meikle, seconded Graham Martin  
Pat Gildea, proposed by Carrie Pawley, seconded Tom Meikle  
Peter Holmes, proposed by Sandra Young, seconded Pat Gildea  
Tom Meikle, proposed by Peter Holmes, seconded Graham Martin  
Christianne Tipping, proposed by Chris Greensmith, seconded Pat Gildea

Two Trustees had been co-opted in 2023 and were duly elected:

Andrew Muir, proposed by Chris Greensmith, seconded Peter Holmes  
Carrie Pawley, proposed by Pat Gildea, seconded Gail Devries

All were elected unanimously.

Christianne Tipping expressed her thanks to Sandra Young, Peter Scriven and David Mortiboys who were standing down as Trustees after many years of valuable service, making important contributions in a variety of roles. Her proposed vote of thanks met with applause.

## **7. To appoint Auditors**

The Hon. Treasurer proposed that Thorne Widgery Accountancy Limited be re-appointed as auditors. Seconded by Tom Meikle, the resolution was approved unanimously.

## **8. Resolution to increase minimum subscription rates**

A modest increase to the minimum annual subscription rates is proposed from 1st January 2025, last increased in 2023, from £42 to £45 for household membership and from £57 to £60 for family membership. Watch membership to increase from £15 to £21 and concessionary membership to remain at £24. There were no questions from the floor and the resolution was proposed by Chris Greensmith, seconded by Lyndon Bracewell and approved unanimously.

## **9. Any other business**

Christianne Tipping expressed her gratitude to Colin Raven for his immense contribution to the Trust in his 37 years here, nearly 30 of them as Director; she noted that his contribution to nature conservation extended beyond county boundaries and he had also had significant impact regionally and nationally. Her vote of thanks was received with applause.

The meeting closed at 8.01pm and was followed by the annual awards ceremony.

R.J. Gillmor  
Honorary Secretary  
17 October 2024