



**Minutes of the 2025 Annual General Meeting
held at Lower Smite Farm
on Saturday 11th October 2025**

40 members attended with no proxy votes requested.

Chair of Council, Christianne Tipping, welcomed attendees and thanked those present for being members. After briefly outlining some of the ways in which membership is central to the functioning of the Trust, she introduced the people who would be speaking during the meeting – John Blakiston (Honorary Treasurer), Bob Gillmor (Honorary Secretary), Chris Greensmith (Honorary Officer for Conservation), and Mike Perry, the Trust's Chief Executive Officer.

Christianne also introduced the other members of the new senior management team which has been established over the last few months - Tom Jenkins (Head of Finance and Operations), Ally Tideswell, (Head of Engagement and Fundraising), who were both in attendance, and Steve Bloomfield (Head of Conservation), who was unable to be present.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Lyndon Bracewell, Pat Gildea, Peter Holmes, Roger Jackson, Janet Morris, David Mortiboys, Roger Pannell and Carrie Pawley

2. Approval of the Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 16th October 2024

The minutes had been previously circulated through the Trust website. Approval was proposed by Chris Greensmith, seconded by Mervyn Needham and agreed with one abstention; 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 made available prior to the meeting via the Trust's website, with hard copies freely available at the meeting. Mike Perry presented the report highlights. He began by reflecting on our nature reserves, which extend to more than 80 sites, covering almost 3000 acres (1200 hectares) across the county with practical work led by our excellent team of Reserves Officers. During the report period, more land was secured adjacent to existing reserves including the extension to Hanley Dingle, additional land on Longdon Marsh and the expansion of Monkwood. £580,000 was raised and 5,000+ trees were planted. The Trust's advisory team now influences the management of 100,000 acres (40,000 ha.), a quarter of the county. Much of this work is delivered through partnerships, including 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. The Trust continues to provide specialist input into policy and local plans alongside selective input into planning casework. Though dismayed that the development adjacent to Tiddesley Wood was given approval at the public enquiry despite our long campaign to make sure it did not proceed; of some small solace is the fact that a lower number of homes will be built than originally proposed.

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 which is undergoing major expansion. In addition, our three-year Wilder Worcestershire – Neighbourhoods Nurturing Nature project, supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund continues to work with community and youth groups across the River Salwarpe to River Severn corridor.

In the last week, we have had confirmation of a £94,000 grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to support the first phase of a major project “A Network for Nature” to restore nature across 400 square kilometres of east Worcestershire including the expansion of Trench Wood, capital works on key sites, land management advice, school, youth and public engagement.

Giving by members is fundamental to our 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 500+ volunteers who give more than 50,000 hours of time equating to c.£600,000 of labour.

Fundraising for 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.

In response to a question from a member, Mike reported that we have not yet contacted Warwickshire County Council or Ragley Hall about Networks for Nature but are working with Heart of England Forest.

Adoption of the Report was proposed by Mervyn Needham, seconded by Linda Butler and agreed *nem con*. (*nemine contradicente* meaning ‘without dissent’)

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

The Report had been made available prior to the meeting via the Trust’s website, with hard copies freely available at the meeting

Before the Honorary Treasurer began his presentation, Mike Perry provided a brief explanation of the pension adjustment figure that appears in the pie chart in the Impact Report that members received with their summer magazine.

The Honorary Treasurer, John Blakiston, gave members an overview of the Trust’s financial control framework including annual budgeting with quarterly reviews and management reports. He explained that day-to-day running costs and reserve management expenditure are met from revenue income, while projects are financed from a designated capital fund. The performance of investments is regularly reviewed by a dedicated committee. Turning to the figures for the year ended 31st March 2025, income was £2.76M with legacies of £241k compared to £354k in 2024, while expenditure was £3.298M including the pension adjustment. This resulted in a deficit of £591k including £129k losses on

investments due to market volatility at the end of the financial year. Net assets stood at £17.167M, chiefly the nature reserves as well as investments of £3.215M. John considered that the Trust is still in a strong position given the circumstances.

Adoption of the Report was proposed by Sandra Young, seconded by Andrew Muir and agreed *nem con*. [A full copy of the accounts with auditor's statement will be published on the Trust's website.]

Christianne proposed a vote of thanks to John who will be stepping down next year after nine years as a trustee and Treasurer. He has been outstanding in this role and we are grateful for all he has done in providing hands-on support for accounts management and providing insight and expert financial advice to the Council. Her vote of thanks met with applause.

6. To elect Members of Council

Biographies for the trustees standing for election were previously circulated on the notice of the AGM which was sent out with the summer magazine. Three Trustees retired by rotation and were re-elected with individual votes, each proposed by Christianne Tipping as Trust Chair:

John Blakiston, seconded by Chris Greensmith

Bob Gillmor, seconded by Tom Meikle

Chris Greensmith, seconded by Mervyn Needham

Two Trustees had been co-opted in 2024 and were duly elected:

Gail Devries, seconded by Andrew Muir

Lyndon Bracewell, seconded by Sandra Young

All were elected unanimously.

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. Any other business

There was one item under any other business - a tribute to Harry Green who was retiring as a trustee after 56 years. While he is staying on as President, we wanted to mark this significant occasion, and to thank Harry for his many years of service. Christianne delivered a heartfelt tribute on behalf of all at the Trust, a copy of which will be published on the website. In discussion with Harry, the Trust has agreed to create a wood pasture extension at Tiddesley Wood, building on the tree planting undertaken there around the millennium. Christianne's invitation to the audience to show their appreciation to Harry for all he has done for the Trust and for nature in the county and beyond prompted a standing ovation. Harry responded with feeling, outlining how much the Trust and its people have meant to him over the many years.

No other items of business having been notified, the meeting closed at 3.15pm and was followed by the annual awards ceremony.

R.J. Gillmor

Honorary Secretary

13th October 2025