



Minutes of the 58th Annual General Meeting of Suffolk Wildlife Trust

Saturday 26th October 2019

Garboldisham Village Hall, Church Road, Garboldisham. IP22 2SE

The meeting commenced at 12.35 pm and was chaired by the Trust's Chairman Nigel Farthing.

1. Apologies for absence

Nigel Farthing reported that apologies had been received from Pip Goodwin and Lord Cranbrook.

2. Confirmation of the minutes of the 57th Annual General Meeting

James Alexander proposed approval of the minutes and this was seconded by John Cousins.

The minutes were accepted as a true and accurate record and **APPROVED** by the meeting.

3. Annual Report of the Board of Trustees introduced by the Chairman, Nigel Farthing

The Chair reflected that the opportunity the AGM offers to report on Suffolk Wildlife Trust's year, is a moment of immense pride. We are a local charity and the dedication of our members and volunteers to the Trust, and indeed to our county, is our great strength.

Across our nature reserves it is thrilling to have so many successes to celebrate, including wader and particularly lapwing breeding success at Trimley Marshes and Micklemere. The 100 acres of Breck grassland at Lackford Lakes are proving valuable for summer migrants, with Lackford one of the best places in the county to hear nightingale. There were notable butterfly successes to report too, including the silver-studded blue colony at Wenhaston Common, plus silver-washed fritillary and purple emperor at Bonny and Bradfield Woods.

The Chair noted that it has been the Trust's long-held belief that society will care more and do more to help if people feel connected to nature, and reflected on the leading role of the Trust's centres in making nature part of everyday life. A particular focus this year has been giving more structure to our offer, so as to take children with us as they grow - from Tots to Teens.

Beyond our reserves, screening and responding to planning proposals is one of the ways we champion wildlife beyond our reserves and Sizewell C is just one of the major infrastructure project plans we are commenting on. We are fortunate to be a coastal county and a significant milestone for our seas was the designation of Suffolk's only marine conservation zone, Orford Inshore, in June 2019. The Trust's Wild Beach learning activities foster understanding of our seas, with this year's Underwater Explorers programme giving children from Leiston the chance to learn marine surveying techniques.

The Chair noted that a highlight of the year was the Trust's Suffolk Nature Summit, when over 200 people came together to hear MPs, young people, farmers and others set out a vision for nature in Suffolk. The Suffolk Show is a major opportunity for us to share our work with people from across the county. It is one of hundreds of events we do each year to help people learn about and get involved with local nature and this year we were awarded 'Best in Show' for our wildlife themed stand.

The Chair reminded us that for the Trust 'local' doesn't mean 'small' and we have big ambitions for Suffolk, not least at Carlton Marshes with our vision for 1000 acres of wildness. The habitat creation was completed in autumn 2019 and, as water levels rise, an expansive landscape of wetland pools and scrapes is emerging. Despite all the diggers and disturbance, lapwing, redshank, avocet and marsh harrier had their most successful breeding year. The focus now is on completing the visitor facilities, including new paths, viewpoints, hides and visitor centre, with a view to opening in May 2020.

The Chair informed Members that the Board and the Trust's leadership team have worked together to agree a new strategic framework which will guide our work to 2025. Our goal is a wilder, nature-friendly Suffolk with stronger populations of the county's key species. We are leading the way to a wilder future on our reserves with a pioneering wildlife approach at Arger Fen & Spouse's Vale and at Black Bourn Valley.

The Chair finished his report by offering his sincere thanks to the Trust's members and volunteers for their support, which underpins all our successes.

4. Presentation of the annual accounts by the Treasurer, James Alexander

The Treasurer reported it had been another solid financial year for the Trust with our Auditors, Larking Gowen, giving us yet another clean audit report. The income this year looked very impressive at £6.6m and costs, as forecast in the budget, at £2.9m. The income, however, included accounting for £2m of the Heritage Lottery Grant for our investment at Carlton Marshes, before the Trust had received it – or for that matter invested it. Legacy income receipts were £300k less than the previous year. However general unrestricted funding had increased, and continued to generate sustainable income that enables us to employ staff and deliver the Trust's underlying work.

This result was driven by income from our members, with membership remaining steady at 13k members – and bolstered by strong performances in retail (up +10%) and learning activities, particularly with children (up +5% year on year).

Our balance sheet remains strong and we continue to operate within our free reserves policy, ensuring that we continue to manage our funds effectively. The range of 3-6 months of core costs is ring-fenced so the Trust can meet all current commitments in confidence.

In respect of Carlton Marshes, this continues to dominate the Trust finances. The overall investment is £8.3m and that has been used on land acquisition and enhancing habitat, access and facilities:

- £3.2m Land purchase
- £2.2m Reserve centre & Infrastructure
- £1.3m Habitat restoration and infrastructure
- £1.6m Activity costs

Looking ahead we are prepared for agri-environment uncertainty, with up to £250k less per annum of funding for nature reserves within the next five years. Adjacent to our core conservation work we

will focus on building sustainable income streams. This includes plans to grow both our membership and our unrestricted income significantly over the next five years. Once Carlton Marshes visitor centre is open this will contribute to increasing our levels of support through membership income and retail profits as proof, we hope, of a new model to grow the impact of the Trust.

Peter Holborn proposed approval of the accounts, and the accounts were unanimously **APPROVED** by all at the meeting.

5. Retirement and election of members of the Board of Trustees

Nigel Farthing announced there were two Trustee retirees, being John Cousins and Peter Holborn.

There were vacancies with one candidate standing for election: Sue Hooton. This appointment was unanimously **APPROVED**.

Thanks were given to Rachel Eburne for her service as Trustee as she had resigned in 2019.

6. Appointment of Auditors at a rate of remuneration to be determined by the Board

The Honorary Treasurer proposed that Larking Gowen be appointed as auditors. The proposal was seconded by David Alborough and unanimously **APPROVED** at the meeting.

6. Any Other Business

There were no items notified in advance.

7. Volunteer of the Year Award

The Trust's President, William Kendall, made a special award to John Bumstead, volunteer at Knettishall Heath. A black poplar was presented to John with our thanks.

Signed.....

Date.....