



# Suffolk Wildlife Trust

## 2023 Conservation Day & 62<sup>nd</sup> Annual General Meeting

**Saturday 14th October 2023**

Nayland Village Hall, Church Lane, Nayland, Essex CO6 4JH

Live-streamed on Zoom

Please book via [suffolkwildlifetrust.org/AGM-2023](https://suffolkwildlifetrust.org/AGM-2023)

Tickets for the Conservation Day are £12 and include lunch

Arrival & coffee from 9.30am

### AGM 10am-10.35am

Chaired by James Alexander, Chair of Suffolk Wildlife Trust's Board of Trustees

- 1 **Apologies for absence**
- 2 **Confirmation of the Minutes of the 61<sup>st</sup> Annual General Meeting**
- 3 **Annual Report of the Board of Trustees by the Chair, James Alexander**
- 4 **Ordinary resolutions:**
  - i) To approve the annual accounts of the Charity
  - ii) To approve the re-appointment of Peters Elworthy & Moore as auditors to the Charity
- 5 **Ordinary resolutions:**
  - iii) To re-elect James Alexander as a Trustee
  - iv) To re-elect Joan Hardingham as a Trustee
  - v) To re-elect Robyn Llewellyn as a Trustee
  - vi) To re-elect Tim Woodward as a Trustee
  - vii) To elect Sharon Goddard as a Trustee
  - viii) To elect Miranda Cooper as a Trustee
- 6 **Any other business** (Please ensure we receive this no later than 48 hours before the Meeting)

### CONSERVATION DAY 10.45am-1pm

Hosted by William Kendall, President, Suffolk Wildlife Trust

- |       |   |
|-------|---|
| 10.50 | <b>Creating landscapes for wildlife</b><br>Ben McFarland                      |
| 11.00 | <b>Farming and wildlife in the Stour Valley</b><br>John Pawsey & Jenny Rawson |
| 11.40 | BREAK   |
| 12.00 | <b>Landscapes for dormice</b><br>Dr Simone Bullion                            |
| 12.40 | <b>Questions</b>  |
| 12.50 | <b>Volunteer of the Year Award 2023</b>                                       |

### LUNCH 1-2pm

### VISIT TO ARGER FEN & SPOUSE'S VALE NATURE RESERVE 2.15pm-4.30pm

Hosted by Ben McFarland (Director of Wildlife Conservation & Recovery) and Will Cranstoun (West Suffolk Sites Manager)

A long walk and a shorter option will be available. Please indicate your preference when booking.

## Annual General Meeting - Board of Trustee Biographies

---

In accordance with Article 19 and Article 20, the Board of Trustees recommends the following four Trustees for re-election to the Board:



### **JAMES ALEXANDER**

James has served as a Trustee for seven years and was appointed Chair in November 2021. He has spent his working career as a strategy and innovation consultant. James was co-founder of Zopa, the world's first peer-to-peer lender and works with Finance Earth, an advisory organisation which helps environmental NGOs make finance work for nature. He is Chair of Agricarbon, a soil carbon measurement company. A birdwatcher, James was part of a team who re-discovered three species of bird thought to be extinct on the island of Sao Tome.



### **JOAN HARDINGHAM**

Joan has served as a Trustee for three years. Since 1981, Joan has run a diverse farming business at Alder Carr Farm, in partnership with her husband and family. Joan has a keen interest in wildlife and conservation and how farming can co-exist with the natural world. She has long been involved as a Council Member of the Suffolk Naturalists' Society and is currently Chair. Joan has taught Rural Science and Biology at Secondary level and understands the need to engage children with wildlife at the earliest age to build a lifelong appreciation.



### **ROBYN LLEWELYN**

Robyn has served as a Trustee for three years. She is Area Director, England, Midlands and East for the National Lottery Heritage Fund. She brings strategic experience and enjoys initiating opportunities to support creative partnership networking, striving to support people and projects that positively change lives through social impact. Robyn has lived in Suffolk for over 30 years and understands how important nature and landscape is to the story of the county and how much it means to its people and the communities in which they live.



### **TIM WOODWARD**

Tim has served as a Trustee for three years. He is a regional surveyor for the Country Land & Business Association (CLA), providing advice to CLA members across nine counties on a wide range of land matters. A RICS-qualified rural surveyor with an MSc in Advanced Farm Management, Tim has practised as a land agent in various parts of the UK for over 35 years. He has a keen interest in the countryside and in environmental matters and, having lived near Bradfield Woods and Bull's Wood for thirteen years, knows both reserves well.

Following a recruitment process led by the Nomination Committee, the Board of Trustees recommends the following two candidates for election to the Board:



### **MIRANDA COOPER**

Miranda is the Conservation & Land Manager for Essex & Suffolk Water, managing 2,900 ha to enhance its conservation value. She has been involved in conservation management for over 20 years and established the partnership with Suffolk Wildlife Trust at Lound Lakes. She spent most of her childhood holidays in east Suffolk with family and moved here in 2016 with her husband and horse (since joined by a dog!). She feels privileged to live in such a beautiful part of the world and hopes to use her experience to support Suffolk Wildlife Trust in their critical work safeguarding Suffolk's wildlife and countryside.



### **DR SHARON GODDARD**

Sharon has enjoyed a long career in teaching and senior leadership roles in further and higher education, and policy and funding roles nationally with the Department for Education and the National Lottery Heritage Fund. She brings experience of Charity governance through her roles with the Food Museum in Stowmarket, Heritage Education Trust and Suffolk Family Carers. Born in Suffolk, Sharon has lived in East Anglia all her life and is passionate about protecting the natural environment. With her partner, she manages her garden with and for wildlife and is actively involved in village environment initiatives.

## Conservation Day - Speaker Biographies

---

### **WILIAM KENDALL**

William is Suffolk Wildlife Trust's President. He farms organically and conventionally in East Anglia. He is an active environmentalist and a campaigner for better food and rural issues. William speaks and writes regularly on these issues, as well as on innovation and the creation and fostering of entrepreneurial cultures in all types of organisation. He built up the New Covent Garden Soup Company and chocolate maker Green & Black's and is now an adviser to soft drinks company Cawston Press. He was High Sheriff of Suffolk 2016 – 2017 and maintains links with many charities and volunteering organisations within the county.

### **BEN MCFARLAND**

Ben is Director of Wildlife Conservation & Recovery for Suffolk Wildlife Trust. He has nearly 25 years of experience working in the conservation sector, and has worked in Suffolk for over a decade. He has oversight of the management of Suffolk Wildlife Trust's 51 nature reserves. He is also responsible for leading the teams that focus on species specific conservation projects, our planning and advocacy work and wildlife advice across the county - as well as the ecological consultancy, Wilder Ecology.

### **JOHN PAWSEY**

John is a fourth-generation farmer from Suffolk and is a Director of Shimpling Park Farms Limited. The farm is mixed with 650ha of arable land and 1,000 New Zealand Romney breeding ewes on Hanslope series chalky boulder clay. John also farms an additional 980ha for neighbouring farmers under farm management contracts. All the farms are managed organically with the first farm being converted to organic production in 1999. Crops grown on the farm feature an array of legumes and cereals as well as some speciality organic crops. Diversifications on the farm include an Organic Higher Level Stewardship (OHLS) Scheme, commercial and domestic rentals and various renewable energy projects.

### **JENNY RAWSON**

Jenny joined Suffolk Wildlife Trust in 2021 to lead the Trust's team of farm wildlife advisors. A skilled ecologist, she has extensive wildlife knowledge and a working understanding of the practicalities of managing productive farms for nature. Jenny has over a decade of experience working for Wildlife Trusts, most recently in Hertfordshire where she was responsible for management of 20 nature reserves. Brought up in Suffolk, Jenny is passionate about the county's wildlife and the importance of landscape scale conservation.

### **SIMONE BULLION**

Earlier this year, Simone retired from the Trust after 24 years of working in the Conservation Team, latterly as Conservation and Consultancy Manager. She has an almost lifelong interest in hazel dormice and has led landscape-scale initiatives to restore their habitats and trialled new survey methods to help detect them. She is also the lead author for the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of the Dormouse Conservation Handbook, to be published in 2024.

## An introduction to Arger Fen & Spouse's Vale

---

Reserve size: 286 acres / 116ha

Nearest village: Leavenheath

In 1991 two sisters, Frances and Edith Vale, purchased a little piece of Suffolk near to their home - a small bluebell wood called Spouse's Grove. Four years previously it had been ravaged by the 1987 storm but it was a place they had regularly walked and knew to be special. Fortunately, their idea of ownership went beyond their own enjoyment of the land. They wanted the long-term security that comes from protective ownership, and for that reason they gifted the wood to Suffolk Wildlife Trust.

Six years later, a large adjoining farm was put on the market which included an area of woodland and several small wet meadows alongside Spouse's Grove known as Spouse's Vale. Once again, the sisters saw this as an opportunity to safeguard a little more of this corner of Suffolk to which they felt so attached, and they generously enabled the Trust to buy the land. Several years later, they chose to include a gift to Suffolk Wildlife Trust in their wills. It was clear that this should also be used to acquire land that would benefit wildlife and in 2004, with the help of Trust members, an adjoining 42 acre arable field, Hulbacks Grove, was purchased.

Historically, Hulbacks Grove had been a mosaic of small meadows, thick hedges and a copse, but that ancient landscape had been cleared away to make a single arable field. All that remained were scattered oak trees marking the positions of some of the lost hedgerows. Acquiring Hulbacks made it possible to once again link the three ancient woods of Spouse's Grove, Arger Fen and Rowley Grove - and the whole field was allowed to naturally regenerate as woodland so as to create a continuous link from one woodland to the next.

The emerging woodland is a powerful demonstration of the ability of nature to reclaim the land. Since the last wheat crop in 2004, there is no trace of the former arable landscape, and instead, a remarkable growth of trees blankets the field. Tens of thousands of trees grew from seed carried by the wind, birds and other animals creating what looks and feels like new woodland. However, it has not been without its setbacks. Ash which comprised much of the new growth has been greatly affected by the *Chalara* fungus, but this has simply allowed other species such as birch and thorn to fill the gaps.

The next chapter in the development of this extensive woodland landscape was the acquisition of Arger Fen. This ancient woodland suffered greatly in the 1950s when the old coppice was cleared to make way for a crop of conifers. Restoration is bringing back natural broadleaved woodland and with this with vast expanses of bluebells, foxgloves and wild garlic. Once again, the irrepressible force of nature is reasserting itself.

The development of this reserve has continued apace since 2012 with the acquisition of two more arable fields and then in 2014, an amazing opportunity to acquire a large block of land to the north - now called Ford's Heath in memory of Gerald Ford whose important legacy underpinned the acquisition. In 2021 the opportunity arose to bring the ancient woodland of Rowley Grove into our protective ownership. Once again, Trust members and donors made this possible through their astonishing generosity and support.

Combined, these acquisitions have allowed the Trust to plan the creation of a genuinely 'landscape-scale' reserve, utilising the inherently poor agricultural quality of the land. The low productivity soil lends itself to the development of grassland and scrub reminiscent of the 18th Century Leaden Heath, a great expanse of what was most likely unenclosed rough grazing land that once surrounded the village of Leavenheath. Over the coming years, a new landscape rich in wildlife will emerge with links to the past and a vision for the future.

In gifting Spouse's Grove to the Trust all those years ago, Frances and Edith Vale could not have envisaged the train of events they would set in motion. Today, we look after a substantial and growing wood and grassland landscape, reconnected to the surrounding countryside through the efforts of neighbouring landowners who have planted hedges and set aside land for new woodland.