

## Minutes of the 63rd Annual General Meeting of Suffolk Wildlife Trust

**Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> November 2024**

Lackford Lakes, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, IP28 6HX and by teleconference

The meeting commenced at 4pm and was chaired by Suffolk Wildlife Trust's Chair, James Alexander.

### **1. Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from: William Kendall, Sir Kenneth Carlisle, David & Pam Wedgwood, Patrick Goymer, Dawn Girling.

### **2. Confirmation of the Minutes of the 62<sup>nd</sup> Annual General Meeting**

The Chair confirmed that no one wished to propose alterations to the Minutes.

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

### **3. Annual Report of the Board of Trustees by the CEO, Christine Luxton.**

The CEO shared that the Trust's 2030 strategy is set by the Board of Trustees, and this then determines where we focus resources and effort to maximise our impact for nature. Bring nature back - to protect the wildlife we still have and bring back what we've lost. The CEO highlighted that the Trust estimates Suffolk has only half of the 30% of habitat needed for an effective nature recovery network. The scale and pace of change society must commit to is unprecedented, but vital.

The CEO shared that this year the Trust added another exciting piece to the landscape jigsaw with the purchase of Worlingham Marshes – this was thanks to grant from National Lottery Heritage Fund and fundraising appeal, she stated that we're now over halfway to our target and have paid off the philanthropic loan for the land purchase. The addition of Worlingham continues a long strategic investment by the Trust, supported by many of the members, which have pieced together the Broadland landscape of the Lower Waveney.

The CEO directed Members to the summary accounts, which were presented as bar charts (and the full accounts pack which was shared on the Trust's website). These give Members an overview of how the Trust is funded - and most importantly where we invest our resources to maximise our impact for nature. The Trust's ambition to make the decade to 2030 the one in which we bring nature back underpins the decisions made by your Board of Trustees about where to focus the charity's resources.

The CEO noted the Board of Trustees is pleased to report that the Trust is in good financial health and thanked members for their support, but we are of course facing with the same economic challenges of all households and businesses, with the rise in costs.

Looking to the future, and the many challenges society will undoubtedly face, the CEO shared that the Board of Trustees is determined that Suffolk Wildlife Trust will continue to be a strong, confident and influential voice for the county's wildlife and wild places. To support this, alongside decisions about new activity and growth, there will be decisions about what to stop or do differently. Locally, this year the Trust closed the coffee van at Knettishall Heath and changed how we deliver our learning activities, closing the centre at Redgrave & Lopham Fen and moving to a community-based outreach approach.

The support of Members in every community of Suffolk gives the Trust our mandate to speak up for nature and your support is more important than ever. The CEO highlighted that what the finances don't show is the magnificent volunteer effort from around 1100 individuals that sits alongside this. This year, collectively our incredible volunteers gave over 63,000 hours of time to support our work and your Board of Trustees (who are volunteers themselves) would like to offer their sincere thanks.

As is so often the case with land purchases, the Trust had to act quickly and for Worlingham we were able to use legacy funds to guarantee the match fundraising for the lottery grant. The Trust choose to keep legacies to use in a considered way like this, to maximise their impact and honour the donors. Some of these stories are in the legacy booklet which all members received this year. At Lackford Lakes we keep alive the memory of Bernard and Bess Tickner and we were pleased to show Bernard's MBE, which was awarded for services to nature conservation.

The CEO updated that the Trusts unrestricted funds, which are the savings that can be drawn on to deliver the day-to-day activities or grow impact were just over £3million. We also hold just over £3million of restricted funds which are grants, donations or legacies given for a specific purpose.

The CEO shared her thanks and that of the Board, to all Members and donors, for their continued support.

#### **4. Ordinary resolutions:**

The Chair, James Alexander proposed the following resolutions:

**i) To approve the annual accounts of the Charity**

Proxy votes received in advance: For 269 / Against 0

- The proposal was **APPROVED** at the meeting.

**ii) To approve the re-appointment of Peters, Elworthy & Moore as auditors to the Charity**

Proxy votes received in advance: For 276 / Against 1

- The proposal was **APPROVED** at the meeting.

**iii) To re-elect Calum Thomson as a Trustee**

Proxy votes received in advance: For 278 / Against 2

- The proposal was **APPROVED** at the meeting.

**iv) To re-elect Joan Hardingham as a Trustee**

Proxy votes received in advance: For 278 / Against 2

- The proposal was **APPROVED** at the meeting.

**v) To re-elect Tim Woodward as a Trustee**

Proxy votes received in advance: For 273 / Against 5

- The proposal was **APPROVED** at the meeting.

**vi) To elect Patrick Goymer as a Trustee**

Proxy votes received in advance: For 276 / Against 0

- The proposal was **APPROVED** at the meeting.

**vii) To elect Roxanne Escobales as a Trustee**

Proxy votes received in advance: For 266 / Against 12

- The proposal was **APPROVED** at the meeting.

**5. Any Other Business**

One question has been submitted by in advance by Clare Higson a member from Pakenham about her local Trust reserve Mickle Mere. Clare is concerned about the management and Trust's Director of Wildlife Conservation & Recovery responded.

*We manage Mickle Mere under a cutting and extensive grazing regime. We cut the vegetation most years and then graze after the cut. This is a tried and tested method widely used across the conservation sector to help maintain the diversity of plants and improve conditions for many bird species. We leave significant parts of the reserve uncut, which helps develop habitats for a larger range of species around the reserve. We get funding for grazing, cutting and infrastructure, although this does not cover the full costs and hence this management regime is not led by funding. As with all of our reserves, we are led by what is best for wildlife.*

*Mickle Mere is now very different to what it was when it was first created. This is a result of natural succession and the maturing of the site as well as high nutrients from the river water, which increases plant growth. Whilst there is less open ground around the scrape and hence fewer visible geese and duck, the denser vegetation still benefits a wide range of species, such as waders and migrant warblers, many of which are of conservation concern. Overall, the wildlife value of Mickle Mere is at least as good as when it was first created. Trying to reverse Mickle Mere back to the condition when it was first created makes little sense ecologically and would be extremely difficult to achieve and maintain. It would cost a lot of money, which could otherwise be put to better use for wildlife, would require*

*significant quantities of herbicides, machinery and diesel. Factors, such as poor river water quality, with its high nutrients that increases plant growth, are outside our control and hence this work would have to be ongoing each year. Therefore, we believe trying to reverse the condition of the site back to what is once was, would not be of any benefit for the reserve or a good use of resources*

The Chair shared that he is appointed by the Board and that the AGM marked the end of his time as a Trustee, latterly as Chair of the Board and the Board have succession plans in place, the Chair introduced Tim Woodward who is the Chair elect. Tim has been a Trustee since October 2020.

The Chair elect thanked James for his contribution to Suffolk Wildlife Trust.

**The Chair closed the meeting and thanked everyone for attending, both in person and on Zoom.**