

**Minutes of the 57th Annual General Meeting
Wednesday 4th December 2019 at 9.00pm at the University of Derby**

In attendance:

Sue Mayer (Chair)
Nigel Huish (Vice-Chair)
Peter Bradbury (Treasurer)
Paul Lynch (Trustee)
Jayn Sterland (Trustee)
Huw Edwards (Trustee)
Fred Pickering (Trustee)
Cara Turton-Chambers (Trustee)
Gillian Foxcroft (Trustee)
Lynn Crowe (Trustee)
Dan Cutts (Trustee)
Jo Smith (CEO)
Stephanie Kershaw (Secretary)
49 members (the register of attendees is retained by the Trust for its records)

In the light of a General Election taking place on 12th December, the AGM was preceded by a Hustings Event with a panel of representatives from a broad spectrum of political and environmental organisations answering questions from the audience about the panel members' attitude to current wildlife and environmental issues.

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from:

Esther Wakeman (Trustee)
Brian Hobby
Margaret Hobby
Mary Baynton

2 Approval of the Minutes of the 56th AGM Held on 22nd November 2018

The minutes of the 56th AGM were accepted as a true record.

3 Receive and adopt the Trustees' Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended 31st March 2019

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and said she hoped everyone had found the hustings event interesting.

She summarised the achievements of the Trust over the last year, saying that the Trust had continued to maintain its Nature Reserves and had added reserves at Peak Quarry

near Brassington and at the Peak Shopping Village near Rowsley. The Trust manages 46 reserves and more than 688 hectares.

The Trust has continued to develop its living landscape work and the Nature Recovery Network will help us think on a bigger scale. We will work with partners and landowners to encourage them to change their land management practices to be better placed to help wildlife. We have added two new living landscapes in the Dark Peak and the Eastern area of Derbyshire around Chesterfield.

In order to achieve all this we have had the support of hundreds of volunteers on our nature reserves, helping with badger vaccination, in our shops and so much more. We thank them so much for this important work for the organisation.

The Chair said she would like to apologise for the timing of the AGM as it clashed with the AGM of the Trent and Lower Derwent Group, who had written to ask the Trust to change the timing in future and the Trust therefore committed to moving the AGM to a weekend in daylight hours. The Trent and Lower Derwent Group had also asked that the meeting be brought forward in the year, but this is less easy to do as there are constraints set by having the accounts audited. The Chair asked the meeting if this met with members' approval and the members agreed.

The Chair then noted the campaign work carried out by the Trust, particularly in respect of badger vaccinations, which has been very successful, hen harriers protection and our planning consultation work.

The Trust has continued to expand its retail base, which is now coming into profit, and the Trust has also received funding from a number of diverse areas including members, corporate supporters and HLF Funding and we thanked all our funders for their support.

The Chair also thanked all the CEO and staff for their hard work during the year to achieve all this.

The Chair went on to say that there is still much more to do. Nature is a crucial part of our response to the climate emergency and the Trust has ambitious plans for the future.

The Chair then handed over to Peter Bradbury, the Treasurer, to report on the finances for the year.

He reported that the Trust had achieved income of just over £2.2m, which was very similar to last year. Income from charitable activities was just over £1.3m, £1,038k being derived from grants and service level agreements and the balance being derived from education, reserve management and environmental agencies. The Trust also received £216k in donations, £30k in legacies, £246k from trading activities, £458k in membership subscriptions and £6k in investment income.

In terms of expenditure to carry out our work, conservation was just under £1m, engagement and education was just under £700k and running of the organisation £945k – in total £2,554. This compares to £2,026 in 2017/18.

The Trust had budgeted for a deficit and therefore the movement in funds (reserves) was a deficit of £326k, with the balance of funds carried forward being £2,472k compared to £2,798k at the end of the previous year. The funds held in reserve can be analysed as £1,745k in restricted funds and £726k in general funds. The Trust holds the equivalence of at least three months' core expenditure in reserve.

Last year, the Trust appointed new auditors, BHP, and they have carried out a thorough review of the Trust's finances and financial processes. They have confirmed the accounts provide a true and fair view of the activities for the year ended March 2019.

The Finance Team has had a busy year, implementing the new Xledger system, which is being used by several Wildlife Trusts, and the Treasurer thanked the Finance team, Ian and Sally, for their hard work.

The following questions were asked by members:

Q The cost of generating funds has increased significantly year on year, but this doesn't seem to translate into increased membership. What is the Trust doing to improve membership rates?

A The CEO said that the Trust has invested funds and some of that investment is in shops and retail outlets. The return on this investment does not come all in year one. But she said that the point about membership numbers is a valid one. The Trust recognises the importance of this and is working with a number of other Trusts to put plans in place to expand our membership recruiting process.

Q What are the dynamics of the membership?

A The CEO said that our retention rate is really high, with a lapse rate of 8 or 9% - when we gain a member we usually keep them but 8 or 9% of 14,000 is a lot of people, so we recruit a large number but a number also die, or move. It is a challenge, but we are grappling with the issue and have plans, including working with the other Trusts and digital recruitment to improve numbers

Q The amount spent on nature reserves 4 years ago was £430k which represents 22% of expenditure but this year was only £239k or 9% of expenditure. The number of reserves has gone up but expenditure on their maintenance appears to have gone down.

A The CEO said there were two reasons - one is that percentage wise, we are much bigger and doing many other things so even if it was the same amount of money the percentage spent on nature reserves wouldn't be the same and we are proud of that. Secondly, the way we account for the way money is spent different, so HLS scheme s and species and habitat projects are now accounted for into species and wildlife rather than nature reserves. So whilst expenditure on nature reserves hasn't gone up, it is the same that it has always been.

The Adoption of the Trustees' Annual Report and Accounts for 2018-19 was carried unanimously by a show of hands.

4 Election of Trustees

Trustees and honorary officers are re-appointed on a three yearly basis and there is no need for any elections this year.

5 Appointment of as the Trust's auditors for the year 2019/2020

The Chair proposed the reappointment of BHP as the Trust's Auditors for the current financial year.

The decision was carried unanimously by a show of hands and BHP Chartered Accountants were appointed the Trust's auditors for 2019/2020

6 Any Other Business (notified in advance to the Trust's Head Office)

The Chair noted that Stephanie Kershaw, the Trust's Head of HR & Governance, was retiring this year and thanked her for all her hard work.

A member asked that the annual report and accounts be circulated in future in a way that did not require the whole report to be printed, as this was not very green. The Chair agreed that this would be investigated.

There being no other business, the Chair drew the meeting to a close with special thanks to the CEO and staff for their work that evening in making the event such a success.