

Minutes of the 62nd Annual General Meeting, Sussex Wildlife Trust

held at Ropetackle Arts Centre, Shoreham-by-Sea and via Livestream, Saturday 9th November 2024 at 10.30am

The President of the Trust, Dr Tony Whitbread, took the Chair.

1. The President welcomed members to the 62nd AGM and introduced the panel. He advised the meeting that it was being recorded and will be uploaded to YouTube afterwards.

It was noted that 24 proxy votes and 4 apologies from members and 3 from Trustees had been received.

Approval of the Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 3rd November 2023 was proposed by Nick Pasricha, seconded by Martin Kyndt, and AGREED by the meeting.

2. The Chair of Council, Nick Pasricha, welcomed attendees to the Annual Members Meeting, noting the strong turnout both in person and online. Reflecting on over five years in the role, the Chair emphasised the importance of the Sussex Wildlife Trust's (SWT) member-led structure, with over 38,000 members playing a vital role in governance and support. The meeting introduced the new strategic plan, Our Wild Sussex, which outlines SWT's ambitions for nature recovery and biodiversity protection through to 2030.

Thanks were extended to SWT's 118 staff and over 1,000 volunteers for their dedication. The past year saw a major organisational restructure, new systems, and fresh ways of working, all aligned to the new strategy. Volunteer engagement grew by 15%, supported by a broader range of roles and improved support.

Key achievements included raising over £110,000 to expand Ebernoe Common, launching the youth-led Deneway nature reserve in Brighton, and engaging thousands through community and education projects such as Discover Rye Harbour and coastal outreach. SWT also appointed a Species Recovery Officer, restored key habitats across several reserves, and continued its leadership in marine conservation through the Sussex Kelp Recovery Project and Beachy Head East Marine Conservation Zone consultation.

In closing, the Chair acknowledged the challenges ahead but expressed optimism through the SWT's progress and impact. Gratitude was extended

to members, volunteers, staff, and communities for their continued support in delivering the vision for Our Wild Sussex.

3. The Honorary Treasurer presented the Accounts and Balance Sheet for the year ended 31 March 2024 and the auditor's report.

SWT reported a positive financial year, achieving a surplus of £1.2 million following two years of deficits. Total income rose by 29% to £6.95 million, largely due to a significant increase in legacy income, which totalled over £1.9 million. Membership numbers remained relatively stable at 37,964 despite the ongoing cost-of-living crisis, and membership income held steady.

Expenditure was tightly controlled, remaining in line with the previous year at £5.7 million, despite inflationary pressures. Key investments included increased capacity at the Rye Harbour Discovery Centre and expanded engagement through projects such as Wild Coast Sussex and Discover Rye Harbour. The Finance team also implemented new accounting software and appointed Price Bailey LLP as the new auditors.

Income sources remained balanced, with roughly one-third each from membership, grants, and fundraising/trading. Legacy income, while variable year to year, played a crucial role in boosting unrestricted funds. SWT's balance sheet remains strong, with total funds increasing to £14.8 million, including £3 million in readily available reserves—nearly double the previous year. These reserves will support strategic investments and provide working capital for large-scale projects such as the Pevensy wetland initiative.

To improve ethical investment and risk management, 53% of Barclays Bank cash balances were moved to the Charities Aid Foundation's cash management platform, with plans to fully transition away from Barclays in the coming year.

Acceptance of the Trustee Report, Annual Accounts and Balance Sheet for the year ended 31 March 2024 was proposed by Alan Stewart, seconded by Sean Ashworth and AGREED by the meeting.

4. It was proposed by Andrew Clinton to elect Louise McLoughlin as a Director, seconded by Helen Marshall and AGREED by the meeting.
5. It was proposed by Linda Clark to elect David Plummer as a Director, seconded by Mark Braithwaite and AGREED by the meeting.
6. It was proposed by Sean Ashworth to elect Mark Mallalieu as a Director, seconded by Martin Kyndt and AGREED by the meeting.
7. It was proposed by Mark Mallalieu to re-elect Nick Pasricha as a Director, seconded by Mark Braithwaite and AGREED by the meeting.
8. It was proposed by Nick Pasricha to re-elect Martin Kyndt as a Director, seconded by Linda Clark and AGREED by the meeting.
9. It was proposed by Andrew Clinton to re-elect Mark Braithwaite as a Director, seconded by Alan Stewart and AGREED by the meeting.
10. The Chair noted that no other candidates had been nominated for appointment.
11. It was proposed by Helen Marshall, seconded by Tim Smart and AGREED to appoint Price Bailey LLP as Auditors for the ensuing year.
12. It was proposed by Tim Smart, seconded by Henri Brocklebank and AGREED that the Council should be authorised to fix the remuneration of the Auditors.

The Chair thanked members for attending the AGM.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 11:25am.

