

CUMBRIA WILDLIFE TRUST

2023 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Minutes of the 59th Annual General Meeting of Cumbria Wildlife Trust Ltd.
Friday 01 December 2023 at Rheged, Penrith and via Zoom

1 Chair's Opening Remarks

Jane Wilson (Cumbria Wildlife Trust's Deputy Chair) welcomed attendees to the Annual General Meeting, including those members joining online and chaired the first part of the meeting. Lord Inglewood (President) chaired the votes. On behalf of the meeting, best wishes for a speedy recovery from ill health were extended to David Sharrod, Chair of Cumbria Wildlife Trust.

2 Attendance

Approximately 92* members attended the meeting in addition to staff and Trustees (including speakers and meeting administrators). In addition, 16 members voted in advance of the meeting by proxy (all proxy votes were submitted by the advertised deadline of 5pm on 30/11/23).

*Members attending online registered and logged in per device; in some cases more than one person shared a screen to attend the meeting.

3 Quorum

The meeting was quorate. The Trust's Articles state that: *twenty Members present in person or by proxy shall be a quorum.*

4 Minutes of the 2022 Annual General Meeting

The minutes had been approved as a correct record of the AGM by the Board of Trustees at its subsequent meeting on 19/01/23, and had been published in advance with meeting papers.

Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

5 To receive the Board of Trustees' Annual Report

The Trustees' Report and the Chair's Report for the year ending 31 March 2023 form part of the 2022-2023 Annual Report & Accounts, and in addition our 2022-2023 Wildlife Highlights features some of our key achievements over the past year; these documents had been published in advance and circulated with meeting papers. The Report was introduced on behalf of the Board of Trustees by Jane Wilson (Deputy Chair of Cumbria Wildlife Trust).

2022-2023 has been another hugely successful year for the Trust and the range of our work is incredibly broad and ambitious.

People are, and always have been, at the heart of what we do.

So I must first of all take this opportunity to thank our volunteers (including our trustees) and our staff for all of their vital work. We can only achieve our goals through teamwork: Everything the

Trust does is the result of close working with local, regional and national organisations through collaborative partnerships: This year we've continued to host the Cumbria Local Nature Partnership, the Cumbria Peat Partnership and Nature North, a Northern regional partnership. The list is growing year on year and is extending our reach, influence and impact for the benefit of people and wildlife in Cumbria.

One of the Trust's key objectives is to make wildlife more relevant to people in their everyday lives, and a key new development this year has been the creation of a small team of staff to work alongside local communities, schools, organisations and individuals to promote volunteering, education and local wildlife conservation.

This supports The Wildlife Trusts' goal of 1 in 4 people taking action for nature's recovery in whatever way is appropriate to their circumstances, and evidence shows that once such a momentum takes hold, it can lead to big shifts in the way society acts and behaves.

One of the first projects is the development of a community nature reserve at Cold Springs, in Penrith' we're working with local residents on how we can restore the site for wildlife and the benefit of the local community, which is really exciting.

I'm particularly pleased that we've now expanded our Wildlife Watch Clubs from just one last year (the Kendal Kingfishers) to a total of six across the county, all of which are proving to be really popular and well-attended.

We're also delighted with the progress that's being made at Gosling Sike, in Houghton near Carlisle which is a thriving hub for local groups and activities. The team of volunteers has made wonderful progress with the wildlife garden and wildflower plant nursery which produced over 80,000 plug plants this year for use in grassland projects across the county.

(I know it's not officially from last year) but this success was recognised a few weeks ago when the volunteer team was awarded not one but 5 Cumbria / Britain in Bloom Awards; amazing recognition for the team and we're delighted for them.

Our portfolio of nature reserves continues to be managed to very high standards and I would like to thank the large number of dedicated volunteers who support the staff team in caring for and constantly improving the condition of our sites.

Our work to bring nature back beyond our own nature reserves continues to go from strength to strength. We've expanded our peatland recovery team which has been involved in delivering a large number of restoration projects, through all stages from survey to design and delivery.

We have also delivered a major programme of grassland conservation and restoration work along with other landowners and commoners, to plan and implement important landscape-scale schemes. The hugely successful *Get Cumbria Buzzing* project (delivered with nine major partners including Highways England) ended with a National Pollinator Conference, and the next phase of this pioneering work is already well underway with a *Planting for Pollinators* project.

In the Irish Sea, thanks to the hard work of the North-West Marine Team and many thousands of members and supporters, we've been successful in our campaign for greater marine protection at Allonby Bay which has just been designated as a Highly Protected Marine Area.

Last year, in partnership with the Wildlife Trust for Lancashire, Merseyside & North Manchester, the Eden Project, and South Cumbria & North Lancashire NHS Trust we launched *The Bay: A Blueprint for Recovery* project which offers wellbeing sessions for those experiencing problems

with their mental health as well as experiencing isolation and loneliness, by connecting them with the beautiful wild world just outside their front door. Over the past 12 months the project has been working successfully with large numbers of people in Barrow, and feedback from participants has been overwhelming and truly inspirational.

The trustees are very conscious of the importance of ensuring that our charity is governed and managed well. The Board is striving to continually improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the way the charity is run to ensure every possible pound goes into delivery of our charitable purposes. This year we completed a Governance Review, the outcomes of which will be implemented in the next and following years and we'll seek to further improve the ways we ensure robust governance.

One of the important steps we've already taken is to diversify the Board by introducing a new 'trusteeship' scheme for 18-25 year olds. Participants are full trustees but have additional support and a term of office that's tailored to their circumstances and stage of life. I'm pleased to say this has already been very fruitful for all involved and has had a very positive impact on the debates and decisions made at the board.

If we are to meet the challenges ahead and increase the scale of our work, raising our game is a top priority. Generating new sources of income and making our resources work even harder for wildlife will be critical in the coming years.

We remain especially grateful to all of our members and supporters for your superb support for wildlife in these difficult times. We're also looking forward to next year, a year in which there'll be a General Election and one in which the Board feels that we need to make a special effort to remind all those candidates standing for Parliament that the public does care about our wildlife and natural environment, and that we expect whoever is elected to be taking urgent action on the climate emergency and wildlife crisis.

Lord Inglewood added his thanks to all our members, volunteers, supporters, funders and staff without whom none of the work we do for wildlife would be possible.

6 Balance Sheet and Accounts for the year to 31 March 2023

The Annual Report & Accounts for the year ending 31 March 2023 had been published in advance and circulated with meeting papers.

Julie Barrett (Treasurer) reported on the Trust's finances for the financial year 2022-2023.

Income for the year included a 26% increase in restricted grants, a reflection of the growth in many areas of the Trust's charitable activities. Those grants helped lift the Trust's income for the year to £4,768,482 (2021-2022 = £4,185,245). Much of that income is restricted to expenditure on specific conservation activities to be carried out in future years and is therefore held in the Trust's funds as at 31 March 2023 to facilitate conservation work in 2023-2024, provide match funding for work that is not fully funded and mitigate reductions to agri-environment grants that will continue to have a significant impact over the next several years. Despite the economic instability in the UK, the Trust's activities expanded significantly. Total expenditure on charitable activities was 35% higher than in 2021-2022.

Gathering resources for the Trust's expanded activities and, in particular, to fund the skilled staff who manage them, is a task that demands considerable time and expertise. Much of the funding

is in the form of grants from a combination of sources including charitable trusts, the National Lottery and government bodies such as Defra, Natural England and the Environment Agency. Where these sources prove insufficient, the balance is supplied by voluntary income such as legacies, donations and membership subscriptions. Despite ongoing concerns over rising costs of living, the year yielded another strong performance. Donations from Trust members and other individuals dramatically exceeded expectations.

The total number of Trust memberships fell by 2.1% in the year to 8,655 as at 31 March 2023. At over £700,000 the unrestricted income contributed annually in the form of membership subscriptions is essential to the Trust's long-term financial stability. Maintaining good relations with our members is at the core of the Trust's ethos and Trust members demonstrate a life-long commitment to our work. Many donate generously to the Trust's work, either to support specific purposes or for use completely at the Trust's discretion. Such one-off gifts underpinned a very encouraging level of donations in the year. Some members remember our work in their wills and have contributed significantly to annual legacy income which, although it is a volatile source of funds, has averaged more than £250,000 over the last ten years. These sources of voluntary income don't just enable us to do many things which would not otherwise be possible but are also vital to the Trust's long-term financial health. The Trust aims for a long-term relationship with its supporters, takes a non-aggressive approach to fundraising and is protective of the data provided to it by each individual.

The 2022-2023 Annual Report & Accounts also detail the Trust's Financial Reserves and Investment performance which continue to be regularly reviewed by the Board's Audit & Resources Committee which also undertakes a detailed annual Risk Management Review and monitors all identified risks which are reviewed by the Board.

Despite world-wide economic uncertainties, Cumbria Wildlife Trust continues to grow and much has been achieved in 2022-2023. Much of the success is due to the generosity of members and other donors and to the hard work and ingenuity of staff and volunteers. The Trustees acknowledge the collective effort required to produce another productive year and congratulate the Chief Executive and his staff and many volunteers for this achievement.

We look forward to working for Cumbria's people and wildlife in the next year.

7 To elect individual Members of the Board of Trustees

Amy Bray and Sheila Gregory stood for election to the Board following the completion of their initial term of office.

In advance of the meeting, 16 proxy votes each had been received in favour and the meeting voted unanimously in favour of both candidates. Amy Bray and Sheila Gregory were duly elected to the Board of Trustees for a 4 year term of office (up to the 2027 AGM).

8 To re-elect individual Members of the Board of Trustees

Volker Deecke stood for re-election to the Board following the completion of a 4 year term of office.

In advance of the meeting, 16 proxy votes in favour had been received and the meeting voted unanimously in favour. Volker Deecke was duly re-elected to the Board of Trustees for a second

term of office (up to the 2027 AGM).

9 To appoint an individual as a Vice President

Peter Woodhead had been nominated as a Vice President. Peter is a long-standing member and supporter of Cumbria Wildlife Trust, including as a Trustee, as the former Conservation Group Chair and is a Badgers Paw winner. Peter was also instrumental in developing our partnerships with Higher Education, in particular with the University of Cumbria and is a champion for making careers in conservation more accessible for young people.

In advance of the meeting, 16 proxy votes in favour of the appointment had been received and the meeting voted unanimously in favour. Peter Woodhead was duly appointed as Vice President of Cumbria Wildlife Trust.

10 Appointment of Auditors

Crowe UK LLP had been recommended by the Board of Trustees and were proposed. In advance of the meeting, 16 proxy votes in favour of the appointment had been received and the meeting voted unanimously in favour. Crowe UK LLP was duly appointed as the Trust's Auditors for the 2023-2024 financial year. The Board of Trustees was authorised to fix their remuneration.

11 Other Business

No formal questions had been submitted to this year's AGM.

There being no further business, Lord Inglewood formally closed the meeting.