

AGM & Members' Day 2020

Saturday 7th November



RE AGENDA ITEM 2 – Minutes of the last meeting held on Saturday 9th November 2019, to be approved

Minutes of the 55th Annual General Meeting, held on Saturday 9th November 2019 at the McMillan Theatre, Bridgwater

194 members attended the meeting with voting carried out by a show of hands. 50 proxy votes were recorded in advance of the meeting and are noted in respect of each resolution.

1. Welcome and formal apologies received

Graeme Mitchell, Chair of the Board of Trustees, welcomed those present, and noted formal apologies received from Simon King OBE (Patron), Richard Atkin (Treasurer), Melville Trimble (Trustee) and John Scotford (former Treasurer).

2. Minutes of the last meeting held on Saturday 3rd November 2018, to be approved

The minutes of the 54th AGM were accepted as a true and accurate record.

Proposer: Matthew Bell

Seconder: Les Cloutman

Vote: All in favour

Proxy: For: 49, Against: 0, Abstentions: 1

3. Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

4. Report from the Chair

Graeme Mitchell, Chair, began by noting that 2018/19 may prove to be a pivotal year for wildlife conservation and the environment, with growing awareness of climate change, the impacts of plastics on marine and coastal wildlife, and the dramatic fall in insect numbers. Climate change was acknowledged as a particularly serious issue for a low-lying county such as Somerset, however funding secured for a new three year Climate Adaption project, led by Somerset County Council, with the Trust as a key partner, would help enable Somerset to plan effectively for rising sea levels, more frequent storms, increasing temperatures and drought; changes already beginning to be experienced.

The continued uncertainty surrounding Britain's departure from the EU, as well as a lack of clarity over what might replace the agri-environment payment schemes, was acknowledged as a challenge for future planning, and reinforced the need to maintain healthy financial reserves to help mitigate the change to future funding schemes.

Graeme went on to present an overview of the Trust's activities in the year, emphasising the importance of working in partnership with other conservation organisations, giving examples of projects such as the Somerset eel project, the

restoration of species-rich grasslands across Mendip, and a four-year survey of bats in Taunton.

Also highlighted was the success of fundraising appeals which had allowed the Trust to build a second scrape at Catcott and would fund the purchase of a critical piece of land at Westhay Moor, transforming water management on the reserve.

Graeme thanked all reserves staff, with special mention given to David Northcote-Wright, Senior Reserves Manager for West Somerset/Blackdowns, who had recently completed 30 years employment with the Trust.

An increase in volunteer numbers was noted, with thanks expressed to everyone who had helped the Trust in the past year, and particular mention given to Richard Denton Cox, following his retirement as Chair of SWT (Sales) Board.

Graeme introduced Georgia Stokes, Chief Executive, who gave a presentation on the development of SWT's new five-year strategy, Towards a Wilder Somerset. Members views were sought, as part of a countywide consultation with key stakeholders, to help develop the new strategy and to explore the role SWT should take to mitigate against climate change and reverse biodiversity decline. The importance of members' views was stressed, with a reminder that the online consultation would end on 30 November 2019. The timescale for publishing the new strategy would be summer/autumn 2020.

5. Presentation and adoption of the accounts

	2019 £	2018 £
Income	2,968,000	2,380,000
Expenditure	2,341,000	2,319,000
Net income	627,000	61,000
Gain on investments	34,000	6,000
Surplus	661,000	67,000

Georgia Stokes, CEO, presented a general summary of the 2018-19 accounts and members were reminded that the full report and accounts were available to view or download from the SWT website, or on request from the Taunton office.

- A surplus of £661k had been achieved in the year, mainly due to exceptional legacy income of £698k, recognised in the year; a £581k increase compared to £117k recognised in 2018.
- Expenditure remained stable at £2.3m due to continuing tight cost control.
- There was a £34k gain in the value of the portfolio of investments.

- Grant income continued to be the largest source of income and increased by £54k, totalling £822k (28% of overall income)
- Legacy income – change in recognition included £241k not actually received in the year.
- Membership income continued to be a vital source of income for the Trust and grew by £38k, with total membership increasing from 18,364 to 19,609.
- First Ecology income increased by 13%, net profit of £52k Gift Aided to the Trust

The 2018-19 Annual report and accounts were adopted.

Proposer: Joanna Davey

Seconded: Charles Graham

Vote: All in favour

Proxy: For: 49, Against: 0, Abstentions: 1

6. Appointment of Auditors

A.C. Mole and Sons were re-appointed as SWT auditors;

Proposer: Dudley Cheesman

Seconded: Ulick Palmer

Vote: All in favour

Proxy: For: 47, Against: 0, Abstentions: 3

7. Introduction and election of Council members

The following were each elected for a term of five years, with voting taking place through a show of hands for each candidate in turn.

Helen Lawy

Proposer: John Scotford

Seconded: Melville Trimble

Vote: All in favour

Proxy: For: 50, Against: 0, Abstentions: 0

Mark Steer

Proposer: Patricia Stainton

Seconded: Sarah Nason

Vote: All in favour

Proxy: For: 50, Against: 0, Abstentions: 0

Sarah Nason, Vice Chair, informed members that it was hoped to increase the number of Trustees, currently 10, in the coming year. The skills particularly sought were those in land and estate management and associated legal skills, agriculture and the rural economy, and charity finance and business management. Any interested persons should contact the Chair or CEO to discuss further.

8. Recognition awards and thanks

Rhiannon Route, Volunteer Coordinator, introduced the Recognition of Service Awards 2019. Awards were presented by Graeme Mitchell to recipients in the following categories:

- Outstanding Individual Achievement – Simon Briggs
- Outstanding Group Achievement – Reptile and Amphibian Group Somerset (RAGS)
- Youth Wildlife Champion – Jack Davies
- Lifetime Achievement Award – Paul Williams

Close

There being no further notified business, the meeting formally closed at 12:10pm.