

Charity No. 218711

CUMBRIA WILDLIFE TRUST

2020 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Minutes of the 56th Annual General Meeting of Cumbria Wildlife Trust Ltd.
Friday 11 December 2020 via Demio

This year, Cumbria Wildlife Trust followed the recommendations of the Charity Commission and National Council for Voluntary Organisations, that in unprecedented times, for the safety of our members and staff, and to effectively manage risks, that our AGM take place remotely. The Trust adhered to the provisions for this made by the Charity Commission and the amended legislation from the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, allowing Company AGMs to be held remotely.

Introduction by David Sharrod, Chair of Cumbria Wildlife Trust

David thanked so many members for attending this digital AGM and for their ongoing support over this difficult year. Members, friends and supporters of Cumbria Wildlife Trust who have been affected by the pandemic were remembered. Thanks and appreciation were also noted for our late patron, David Bellamy who passed away earlier this year. He was an indefatigable and energetic supporter of our Trust and of the Wildlife Trusts movement across the UK, and inspired a new generation of naturalists and conservationists.

A recording of the 2020 AGM including presentations on our Nature Reserves by Joe Murphy, Senior Reserves Officer and an Overview of the year by Stephen Trotter, CEO can be viewed here: <https://my.demio.com/recording/dG7Dfpmn>

1 Chair's Opening Remarks

President Lord Inglewood welcomed everyone to the formal business of the meeting.

2 Attendance

58 members attended the meeting, in addition to the speakers and presenters. In addition, 45 members voted by proxy in advance of the meeting, by the given deadline of 5pm on 10/12/20.

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 To confirm the minutes of the 2019 Annual General Meeting

The minutes had been circulated with meeting papers in advance, and were also available to view onscreen during the meeting. No corrections were received, and they were agreed to be a true record of the meeting.

Matters Arising

At the 2019 AGM, a query had been raised about the need to change auditors. In response to this, and as outlined in the notes on the 2020 AGM invite, a full review was conducted by the Board's Audit & Risk Committee and as a result, different audit partners were engaged.

5 To receive the Board of Trustees' Annual Report

The Annual Report & Accounts for the year ending 31 March 2020 had been circulated in advance with meeting papers, and was also available to view onscreen during the meeting.

David Sharrod (Chair, Cumbria Wildlife trust) presented the report on behalf of Trustees:

Never has the work of Cumbria Wildlife Trust been more needed. The profound, long-term and interrelated threats to our wildlife continue regardless of COVID-19: climate change; loss of biodiversity; political and economic change. Society faces multiple challenges including obesity and mental health crises. The global Covid-19 pandemic cast a deep shadow over the year, bringing huge concerns about the health and wellbeing of our members, volunteers and staff, along with fears about the wider impacts on the county's wildlife and the Trust's finances. We have no illusions about the difficult future economic environment. There is also hope though. We believe profoundly that the natural world offers answers and help in tackling all of these problems, with many people now discovering the benefits of a connection with nature, and questioning their own lifestyles.

That is why it is so pleasing to report that taken as a whole 2019 – 2020 was a good year for the Trust. The report reflects a passionate, well-managed organisation; stable, yet agile enough to adapt to new circumstances. My personal highlights include the acquisition of Bowberhead Farm, one of the most important areas for wildflower-rich meadows in the North of England which are now under the stewardship of the Trust. I am also delighted by the success of the five year Eycott Hill project, an outstanding example of upland management which can help solve some of the big challenges that face the uplands as we leave the EU.

As for all of us, this has been a challenging year for Cumbria Wildlife Trust and I would like to thank all of our staff and volunteers for their hard work and commitment over this period. Particular thanks to all our members and supporters for your amazing response during these difficult times. Looking ahead, the team is working hard on building our resilience and planning for getting through the uncertain times that lie ahead. I am confident that we can emerge from 2020 and 2021 in a strong position to lead nature's recovery across Cumbria in the years ahead.

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

6 Balance Sheet and Accounts for the year to 31 March 2020

The Annual Report & Accounts for the year ending 31 March 2020 had been circulated with meeting papers in advance and was also available to view onscreen during the meeting.

Julie Barrett (Treasurer) reported on the Trust finances for the financial year 2019/2020.

Thanks were noted to the Trust's Finance & Administration team for maintaining all our core systems and payments, working on the annual Audit and producing the Annual Accounts, all

done remotely. Thanks to all who supported the Trust financially, and continued to give their time, especially our volunteers.

At the end of March 2020, the Trust's restricted funds benefitted from a donation of land and buildings: Bowberhead Farm, valued at £759,800 in lieu of inheritance tax. This, combined with increased legacies, pushed total income well beyond that of the previous year. However, with those factors excluded, income and expenditure were both 15% lower than in 2018/19 during which significant capital works had been undertaken by contractors engaged by the Trust. During 2019/20 major capital works were again undertaken, in particular for the *Get Cumbria Buzzing* project but although these works were supervised by Trust staff for the benefit of pollinators, they were carried out by Highways England and thus do not form part of the Trust's income and expenditure.

Fixed assets (excluding investments but including nature reserves owned by the Trust) increased by £810,314 which was mostly attributable to the gift of Bowberhead Farm. This asset now forms part of the Trust's funds which increased by £857,546 in the year.

St the same time as carrying out significant conservation work, much preparatory work was undertaken to pave the way for the Trust's activities in 2020/21 and beyond. Gathering resources for such 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.

The total number of Trust memberships rose by 0.6% in the year, to 7,510 at 31 March 2020, less than expected. Data for March 2020 suggests that the result was suppressed by a net loss of memberships in that month due to the initial impact of COVID-19. However, at almost £600,000 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 lifelong 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 has averaged more than £200,000 over the last ten years. This income enables us to do many things which would otherwise not be possible. 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.

7 To elect individual Members of the Board of Trustees

One nomination was received by the due date to fill the vacancy for an individual member on the Board of Trustees: Fiona Southern (co-opted by the Board on 02 July 2020). 44 votes were cast at the meeting, via electronic poll; 43 were in favour of the motion with 1 abstention. In advance of the meeting, 45 proxy votes had been received by the given deadline, all in favour of the motion.

8 **Appointment of Auditors**

Crowe UK LLP were proposed. 42 votes were cast at the meeting, via electronic poll; 41 were in favour of the motion with 1 abstention. In advance of the meeting, 45 proxy votes had been received by the given deadline; 42 in favour of the motion, 1 vote against, and 2 abstentions.

Crowe UK LLP was duly re-appointed as the Trust's Auditors for the 2020/2021 financial year. The Board was authorised to fix their remuneration.

9 **Other Business**

On behalf of everyone, Trustees, staff and members, David Sharrod, Chair of Cumbria Wildlife Trust thanked the Trust's CEO Stephen Trotter. He noted that in times of crisis, organisations look to their leaders for inspiration and positivity, and we are very lucky to have him at the helm.

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