

GWENT WILDLIFE TRUST LIMITED

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Charity No 242169 Company No 821535

MINUTES OF THE 56th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Held at the Glen-yr-Afon House Hotel, Usk
On Wednesday 18th September 2019 at 7pm

1. Vice-President's Welcome

Vice- President, David Leat welcomed everyone to the meeting. He explained that he had been asked to chair the meeting by retiring President, Roger James. David drew the audience's attention to GWT as part of the family of Wildlife Trusts. He gave a quotation from Henry David Thoreau, "The question is not what you look at but what you see." David emphasised the importance of individual members, concerned for what is happening in their own environment.

David then spoke about Roger James and the debt GWT owed to him, listing Roger's achievements. Council had offered Roger the position of President Emeritus in recognition of his dedication to the Trust, which Roger had accepted. David presented him with his Roll of Honour badge and certificate. In his reply, Roger thanked his wife Julia for her unstinting support over the years.

Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from:
Roger Finn, Elsa and Adrian Wood.

2. Minutes of 2018 AGM

A copy of the Minutes had been made available on the Trust's website from the 1st September as well as paper copies made available at the meeting.

Acceptance of the minutes was proposed by Steph Tyler and seconded by Richard Waller. They were approved without dissent and signed by the Vice- President as a correct record. There were no matters arising.

3. Annual Report for the year ended 31 March 2019

Alison Willott, Chair of Trustees, gave a short report on Council's work during the year. She began by celebrating the cancellation of the proposed M4, thanking Ian Rappel, the staff and all the volunteers who had worked tirelessly on the campaign. Alison commended the co-operation between all the organisations involved, particularly CALM, and also the help given by Sophie Howe, the Future Generations Commissioner. Secondly, Alison drew attention to the efforts made to raise the necessary money to purchase Bridewell Common, next to our Magor Marsh reserve. She thanked the staff and all our generous members who had made this possible. Council had set up a new governance group of five trustees who were busy scrutinising aspects of the Trust's governance.

A new process for recruiting trustees had been established resulting in the co-opting of five new trustees. Between them they were bringing a wide range of expertise and enthusiasm to Council.

We had said goodbye, after five years, to our Chief Executive, Ian Rappel and Alison paid tribute to his work for the Trust. We have appointed a replacement, Adam Taylor, who is currently Senior Reserves Manager at Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust. He will join us on November 25th. Until then, Gemma Bodé, Deputy CEO has taken on the role as Acting CEO.

Gemma Bodé, Acting CEO, then reported on the progress made by the Trust during the last 12 months. Her snapshot of achievements was wide ranging, covering thousands of volunteer day's spent working across the Trust's reserves, the huge number of children who had taken part in events and the increase in Trust membership.

A new initiative, My Wild Newport, had identified fifty green spaces within the city and was now focussing on ten main sites. Connections were being built with other local groups and partnerships and many events had already taken place.

Gemma also spoke about the Trust's successful campaign against the building of a new M4 across the Levels. She drew attention in particular to the work done by Sarah Harris, Mike Webb and especially Richard Bakere who had given evidence on behalf of the Trust at the enquiry.

Gemma spoke about the specific ways in which the Trust had raised money towards the Bridewell Common Appeal. Currently we were approximately £40,000 short of the £250,000 target but more money was expected that would take us beyond our target.

One of the Prisk Wood small leaved limes had been listed in the finalist of Wales Tree of the Year 2019 competition. Gemma urged everyone to go on line and vote for our tree! Finally, she showed a short film that had been made as part of the M4 campaign celebrating the special nature of the Gwent Levels.

David Leat asked whether there was a possibility of the Levels being designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. He also queried whether there was a strategy in place to increase Trust membership. Gemma outlined the strategies being followed to recruit more members.

The Vice-President asked that the Annual Report be adopted by the members.

Proposed: Jonathan Stephens, Seconded: Chris Field. Agreed without dissent.

4. Annual Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2019

The Treasurer, David Jones, presented the Annual Accounts, reporting that this had been a year of consolidation, financial planning and campaigning. The wonderful Pat Gorvin legacy had allowed us to allocate funds to priority projects. Vehicles and equipment had been upgraded and the new IT system was in place. Overall income for the year was £763,729. Expenditure was £1,121,331 The total income from funders had shown an increase of almost £20,000. Membership had also increased. However, David highlighted the need to decrease the deficit and increase income so that the Trust has a healthy future. He assured members that new fundraising and deficit reduction strategies are in place and are starting to bear fruit.

One question was asked regarding new strategies to reduce the deficit. It was explained that the Trust was chasing large grants that are available e.g. in the area of improving mental health. This would hopefully reduce the cost of staff funding from core funds.

**The Vice- President asked that the Annual accounts be adopted by the members.
Proposed: Robert Kenny, Seconded: Jon Dunkelman. Agreed without dissent.**

5. Adoption of Auditors for year ending 31 March 2020

The Treasurer proposed the re-appointment of UHY Hacker Young of Newport as Auditors for the current year.

Proposed : Alison Willott, Seconded: David Jones. Agreed without dissent.

6. Articles of Association

The Chair explained that the Governance group had been working through the Articles of Association looking at parts that needed to be updated. To do this we needed to notify the Charities Commission. Council had decided that the changes would be left until next year's AGM where an Extraordinary meeting would be held, within the AGM, to agree the changes.

7. Election of Trustees

The Chair, Alison, reported that five new trustees had been co-opted during the year as a result of the new recruitment policy. They brought a huge range of knowledge and skills to Council and also reduced the age profile. Short biographies had been posted on the GWT website. Alison introduced Tom Clancy, Chris Duncan, Natalie Harris, David Rees and Rebecca Spooner to the meeting.

The Vice-President proposed the election of all five as Trustees. This was agreed without dissent.

7. Election of Officers

The Vice-President reported that Chair, Alison Willott, Vice-Chair Rob Waller, Secretary, Sue Finn, and Treasurer, David Jones, were all willing to stand for re-election and that this was the recommendation of Council. Two long serving trustees were retiring, Fay Mansell who had served as Secretary during her years on Council and had recently relocated to Norwich and Richard Waller who had served as Trustee and Council Chair. During the year, Alice Rees had resigned for personal reasons. All were thanked for their hard work for the Trust.

The Vice-President proposed the re-election of all four officers. This was agreed without dissent.

8. Election of Vice Presidents

Two Vice Presidents were retiring this year. David Richards had served as a Vice-President for five years. David Leat thanked him for his support as a Vice President and his work both as Chair of Council and as a trustee. David Leat was also stepping down after the AGM having served many years as a Vice-President, Secretary and Chair of Council and ten years as a Trustee. Alison thanked David for all his commitment to, and hard work on behalf of, the Trust. Council proposed that Richard Waller who had stepped down as a trustee was elected to the position of a Vice -President.

The Vice-President proposed that Richard be elected. This was agreed without dissent.

On behalf of the Trust, Alison thanked David Leat for chairing the meeting, his final duty as a Vice-President. David closed the AGM part of the evening by thanking all staff, volunteers, Trustees and members for their support throughout the year.

Signed

Date

The AGM was followed by an open meeting:

Photographic Competition

David Leat invited Rob Waller and Andy Karran to announce the winners of the 2019 Photographic Competition. Andy commented on the very high standard of the entries. A new category had been introduced this year, a photo taken on a mobile phone. The audience was treated to a wonderful slide show of the best entries in all categories. Prizes were presented to the winners and runners-up.

Following a short break for tea and coffee, four members of staff gave short presentations on specific areas of the Trust's work.

This was followed by the drawing of the raffle.