



The Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire

DRAFT
MINUTES OF THE TWENTY-NINTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON
SATURDAY, 19TH OCTOBER 2024 AT 12:00 AT
SHARNBROOK ACADEMY, ODELL ROAD, SHARNBROOK, BEDS, MK44 1JL

Present: Michael Allen (President), Professor William Stephens (Chair), Professor Sir Partha Dasgupta (President Elect)

Trustees: Dr Hilary Allison, Michael Krause, Michael Samways, Richard Vyse, James Marsh, Paul Solon, Caroline Brown, Hannah Bartram, Jan Davis, Matthew Hayes, Rebecca Jarrett plus 121 registered members in person, and 58 members online.

1. **Introduction:** The President, Michael Allen, welcomed members to the AGM. He explained that he has previously visited all 47 Wildlife Trusts and that being a member of this Trust is very remarkable.
The President explained that questions submitted in advance would be answered under Any Other Business. For those present, questions can be asked during the AGM and for those streaming, questions can be submitted via email or by telephone to the Trust. Those questions would be answered later in the week by staff and Trustees.

The President explained that members would be asked to propose or second a resolution. To do so members would be asked to raise their hand and clearly state their name in full for the purpose of the Minutes. Furthermore, if there was a clear majority in favour, he would ask if there were members who opposed the resolution or who wished to abstain.

The President then invited the Chair, Professor William Stephens, to read out the apologies and to advise on proposing or seconding Resolutions.

2. **Apologies for Absence:** Apologies for absence were received from:

4 Trustees:

- Kimberley Dunn
- Matthew Day
- Kathryn Hageman
- Rebecca Stock

1 Vice President:

- Dr Jenna Bishop

2 Committee Members:

- Rob Hall
- Reiner Schulte

And, 27 Members

Voting would be by a show of hands for those in the room. Members who were absent or who were streaming the meeting have had the opportunity to vote by proxy which would be read out for each resolution.

3. Election of President (Resolution 1):

Michael Allen explained that his last task as President would be to propose the election of the new President. Council proposes Professor Sir Partha Dasgupta. Sir Partha became Vice President of the Trust in 2021 and spoke at the 2021 Annual Meeting. He is Britain's leading environmental economist and has lived in Cambridge since 1985. His February 2021 report *The Dasgupta Review* on the economics of biodiversity was published by HM Treasury. Professor Sir Partha & Lady Carol Dasgupta are longstanding members of the Trust. Their biography has been posted on the Trust Website. He is the Frank Ramsey Emeritus Professor of Economics at the University of Cambridge and Fellow of St John's College, Cambridge. He was appointed Knight Bachelor in the Queen's Birthday Honours in 2002, for "services to economics" and a Fellow of the Royal Society in 2004. The President stated that it was a privilege to hand over the Presidency to such a distinguished member of the Trust.

Council proposed Professor Sir Partha Dasgupta be elected as President. Seconded by Sir Graham Fry and approved.

Voting Tally:

Proxy: For 145, Against 0, Abstention 1

There was a visual show of hands at the meeting, with no votes against or abstentions. The motion was carried with acclamation.

At this point of the meeting Professor Sir Partha Dasgupta took the Chair as President.

The President, Professor Sir Partha Dasgupta thanked Michael Allen and gave a short speech. He explained that he was an economist, and the relationship between economics and nature was a difficult one, but that the neglect of nature in economics comes from unawareness, not from hostility. The President stated that he hoped to use his time as President to promote this subject, as he had been doing for many years. He explained that he was a mathematician, rather than a naturalist, and one of the pleasures of assuming the Presidency had been to get to know Brian Eversham, an outstanding naturalist. He hoped to serve the Trust well and to engage the attention of Cambridge University to the Trust. He finds biodiversity a very interesting subject for the citizen, even more so than climate change because it is easier for individuals to have an impact.

4. Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 14 October 2023 (Resolution 2):

The draft minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 14 October 2023 had been posted on the website and offered to members attending on the day. Members who attended last year's meeting were asked to approve the Minutes of the Meeting as a true record. There were no matters arising which were not on the agenda.

Proposed by: Sir Charles Chadwyck-Healey

Seconded by: Martin Baker

Voting Tally:

Proxy: For 144, Against 0, Abstention 2

There was a visual show of hands at the meeting, with no votes against and no abstentions. The motion was carried.

5. Presentation of the Annual Report of the Board of the Trustees (Resolution 3):

The President advised that the presentation of the Annual Report would be given by Professor William Stephens, Chair.

The Chair said that it was his pleasure to commend this year's Annual Report and advised that the report was out earlier than it has been in previous years. He explained the report covered the year ending March 2024 and concentrated on the impact the Trust was having, as well as how it was meeting its charitable objectives. He thanked the Trustees and the team who put the report together for their input, and expressed his hope that members enjoyed it.

The Chair stated that the turbulent times he spoke of last year have continued, but that the Trust was still fighting hard to preserve and enhance legal protection for wildlife. He highlighted how many people were able to raise the profile of the environment significantly during the past election campaign and encouraged members and the Young People's Forum to continue writing to their MPs to ask what their views were on wildlife and nature protection.

The Chair said the outlook was gloomy, but that the Trust had achieved a great deal and had a lot to be proud of. The Chair started his role four years ago, during projects like Speechly's Farm and at the beginning of Strawberry Hill, and he advised that the team had done a great deal of work to get us to the point of development that we have now reached.

The Chair thanked Brian Eversham and all the Trust staff for making best use of Trust resources and continuing to meet its charitable objectives. He spoke of the diligence and dedication of volunteers and thanked them for their work. He entreated members to continue their membership and invited them to consider making a legacy pledge.

The Chair concluded by commenting on the success of the Strawberry Hill Appeal, which had raised close to £500,000.

The Chair commended the report and reminded Members that they would have an opportunity to vote on the Annual Report and Annual Accounts shortly.

Council had proposed the formal adoption of the Annual Report of the Board of Trustees. Robert Bruce McChesney seconded the Annual Report of the Board of Trustees. The Annual Report was adopted.

Voting Tally for Annual Report of the Board of Trustees:

Proxy: For 140, Against 0, Abstention 6

There was a visual show of hands at the meeting, with no votes against or abstentions. The motion was carried.

6. Presentation and Adoption of the Accounts and Auditors' Report (Resolution 4):

Ms Hannah Bartram, Honorary Treasurer, presented a brief financial overview for the year ended March 2024, with key headlines as follows:

- The total income for the last financial year was £6.9 million.
- 70% of the income came from grants, partnerships and business activities, with over 30 different funders supporting the Trust. The Trust sold its conservation expertise, and business activities included running events and selling merchandise.
- 30% of the income came from memberships, donations and legacies, which remained a critical element of income generation. The Honorary Treasurer expressed gratitude to all individuals and organisations for financial contributions and strengthening the Trust's voice when advocating and campaigning for wildlife.
- The total expenditure was £7.1 million.
- 45% of expenditure went towards managing our nature reserves, 23% to conservation of land beyond nature reserves, working to improve this land for wildlife e.g. giving wildlife advice to over 100 land managers
- 32% was spent on Fundraising and Education. Last year, the Trust reached over 9,500 people of all ages through staff-led education events and activities.
- Since the accounts were finalised and after years of negotiation, the monies committed for the long-term management of Trumpington Meadows had been paid. The commuted sum was for £4.65 million for 50 years of management.
- The Trust had been successful in securing £975,000 from Biffa to purchase the other half of Strawberry Hill. The Honorary Treasurer thanked everyone who donated to the £1.5 million fundraising campaign and advised that the Trust was in the process of selling the buildings which should generate an income of about £1 million.
- The Honorary Treasurer advised that the Trust had faced a number of significant financial challenges throughout the year, many of which were ongoing. This included rising costs for materials, tools, contractors and salaries, with membership subscriptions not increasing at the same rate. Membership fees have been held at the 2017/18 rate, in recognition of the squeeze on disposable income. The Trustees recognised the need to pay the market rate for staff salaries in order to retain skilled staff. The Honorary Secretary also advised that competition for grants remained extremely high and that the Trust, together with other organisations, was awaiting the Autumn Government Budget on 30th October 2024.
- The Honorary Secretary advised of the opportunities that the Trust had, including:
- The 50% share that the Trust owns in Muchwood Green Burials, which was already generating a return of 7% on our investment. The Trust continued to look for other suitable sites across all three counties.
- Speechly's Farm was now registered for carbon credits, which we would be able to sell.
- By enhancing our sites for wildlife, we were generating Biodiversity Net Gain units. Members were directed to the conservation staff for further information. The Trust would soon start to sell these to developers, which would generate an income.
- We were looking at improving our digital marketing and new ways of gaining support, as well as maintaining a strong control over costs.
- The Honorary Treasurer advised that Trustees had approved another investment budget for 2024/25 and were aiming to move to a balanced budget within two to three years. Generous legacies the Trust had received have allowed us to

continue our valuable work, while investing in our transformative conservation work at places like the Great Fen and Strawberry Hill.

The Honorary Treasurer concluded by thanking members for their continued support and expressed her hopes that members were proud of all their Wildlife Trust is achieving.

The Chair commended the Annual Report and Annual Account to Members.

There were no questions for the Annual Report of the Board of Trustees or the Annual Accounts and Auditors' Report.

Council had proposed the formal adoption of the Annual Accounts and Auditors' Report. Stephen Morrey seconded the Annual Accounts and Auditors' Report. The Annual Accounts were adopted.

Voting Tally for the annual Accounts and Auditors' Report:

Proxy: For 141, Against 1, Abstention 4

There was a visual show of hands at the meeting, with no votes against or abstentions. The motion was carried.

7. Appointment of the Auditors (Resolution 5):

The President explained that Price Bailey were proposed by Council as Auditors. The previous year's audit was conducted by Saffrery Champness, after which the audit was put out to tender, and Price Bailey were selected.

The Honorary Treasurer advised that the Board of Trustees conducted a tendering process for the financial audit of the Trust. Four audit firms responded and three were interviewed. The Trustees proposed the appointment of Price Bailey as Auditors. They were a top 30 accountancy & business advisory firm based in the region and had a specialist team who concentrated on the charity sector so were very well suited for the Trust's needs.

Council had proposed the appointment of Price Bailey as Auditors. Seconded by Peter Meadows and approved.

Voting Tally:

Proxy: For 139, Against 4, Abstention 3

There was a visual show of hands at the meeting, with no votes against or abstentions. The motion was carried.

8. Re-election of Council Members (Resolution 6):

Matt Hayes is standing for re-election.

Members were advised that Matt is a Research Assistant at the University Museum of Zoology in Cambridge. In 2022, Matt started his PhD and was working on WTBCN reserves, investigating how we can maintain suitable microclimates for species. Matt is a member of the WTBCN Cambridge Local Group Committee and works closely with the Young People's Forum.

Council proposed Matt Hayes be re-elected to Council. Seconded by Martin Baker and approved.

Voting Tally:

Proxy: For 141, Against 2, Abstention 3

There was a visual show of hands at the meeting, with no votes against or abstentions. The motion was carried.

9. Formal Election of co-opted Trustees (Resolution 7):

The President explained that there was one Trustee, **James Marsh**, who had been co-opted since the last AGM and who now needed to be formally elected to the Council. His biography had been published on the website for the past month but was summarised as follows:

James Marsh is a Solicitor and has been a committee member of Cambridge Law Society and also a trustee and board member of Cambridge Science Centre. Outside of work, he enjoys music, photography, heritage, nature and conservation. He is a member of the Wildlife Trust BCN, the RSPB, the National Trust and Cambridge PPF.

Council proposed James Marsh be elected to Council. Seconded by Hilary Hoyle and approved.

Voting Tally:

Proxy: For 135, Against 3, Abstention 8

10. Council Members Standing Down:

The President advised that five Council Members were standing down:

Professor William Stephens stood down as Chair of Council

Paul Solon stood down as Honorary Secretary having served his six-year term.

Rebecca Stock stood down as Trustee having served her term.

Rebecca Jarrett stood down during the year.

Kathryn Hageman stood down during the year, having been co-opted since the last AGM.

The President thanked all five Officers on behalf of the Council and Staff for their contribution to the effective working of the Trust.

11. Election of Chair (Resolution 8):

Dr Hilary Allison spent 25 years of her career at The Woodland Trust and more recently following her government appointment in June 2020 as a non-executive Forestry Commissioner. She has been a Trustee since 2021.

Council proposed election of Hilary Allison as Chair. Seconded by Martin Baker and approved.

Voting Tally:

Proxy: For 140, Against 1, Abstention 5

There was a visual show of hands at the meeting, with no votes against or abstentions. The motion was carried.

12. Election of Vice-Chair (Resolution 9):

Michael Krause worked in nature conservation charities, including Fauna and Flora International, Plantlife, the RSPB and the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, for over twenty years. He has been a Trustee since 2023.

Council proposed election of Michael Krause as Vice-Chair. Seconded by Sir Graham Fry and approved.

Voting Tally:

Proxy: For 142, Against 1, Abstention 3

There was a visual show of hands at the meeting, with no votes against or abstentions. The motion was carried.

13. Election of Honorary Secretary (Resolution 10):

Jan Davis is an experienced Human Resources leader specialising in developing managers in complex global environments and is current Chair of Trustees of the Hunts Community Cancer Network. Jan became a Trustee in 2020.

Council proposed election of Jan Davis as Honorary Secretary. Seconded by Sir Charles Chadwyck-Healey and approved.

Voting Tally:

Proxy: For 140, Against 1, Abstention 5

There was a visual show of hands at the meeting, with no votes against or abstentions. The motion was carried.

14. Election of Honorary Treasurer (Resolution 11):

Hannah Bartram has spent her professional career in the public policy and environment sectors. Hannah became a Trustee in 2019 and was elected Treasurer in 2022.

Council proposed re-election of Hannah Bartram as Honorary Treasurer. Seconded by Peter Warden and approved.

Voting Tally:

Proxy: For 139, Against 1, Abstention 6

There was a visual show of hands at the meeting, with none against or abstentions. The motion was carried.

15. Election of Chair of Conservation, Education and Community Committee Resolution 12:

Sam Brockington is a Professor of Evolution in the Department of Plant Science at the University of Cambridge, and Curator of the Cambridge University Botanic Garden. Sam has been a Trustee since 2017 and Chair of CECC since 2023.

Council proposed Professor Sam Brockington as Chair of Conservation, Education and Community Committee. Seconded by Professor Michael Akam and approved.

Voting Tally:

Proxy: For 142, Against 1, Abstention 3

There was a visual show of hands at the meeting, with none against or abstentions. The motion was carried.

16. Resolution to ratify Council decision to change fees for ordinary membership for new Members (Resolution 13):

Council proposed to raise the minimum subscription for newly joining Individual and Joint Members from £42 to £48 and £48 to £54 respectively. Seconded by Martin Baker and approved.

Voting Tally:

Proxy: For 123, Against 22, Abstention 1

There was a visual show of hands at the meeting, with none against and one abstention. The motion was carried.

17. Announcement of Awards:

The President stated that the Trust relied on the dedicated support of a vast range of volunteers, including many in the audience. The awards honoured volunteers whose contribution had been particularly outstanding. The Awards took the form of £75 worth of books.

The **Richenda Huxley Award** recognises the outstanding contribution to any aspect of the work of the Trust. This year the Trust awarded three volunteers.

Barbara Cracknell a Wildlife Watch volunteer for over 10 years as well as assisting with Forest School sessions, Brownies/Cubs and school visits. She had also been a consistently helpful presence for the communications team and had turned her hand to many tasks. Her continued work and dedication had been tireless and was deeply appreciated.

Unfortunately, Barbara was not present on the day but received a round of applause.

David and Sian Johnston are both incredibly hardworking, loyal and reliable volunteers on reserves work parties in Bedfordshire, often volunteering three days a week in Bedfordshire. Most recently they have become regular volunteers at Strawberry Hill. Their invaluable practical skills – everything from fencing and brush cutting to lambing - as well as their support and guidance for new volunteers has been incredibly beneficial to the team.

David and Sian came forward, received their books and then expressed their thanks for the award. Sian said they enjoy volunteering and felt they made a contribution. She also praised the dedication and hard work of their fellow volunteers. They left to a round of applause.

The **Oliver Rackham Award** recognises individuals who had demonstrated outstanding service to wildlife in Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire through conservation, monitoring or research. This year the Trustees decided to award two volunteers.

Charles Turner: In making this award, the Trust recognised Charles's tireless dedication to its cause, integrating conservation, recording and research for over 50 years. He has been particularly dedicated to local sites such as Gamlingay Cinques and Gamlingay Meadow but also acted as an advocate for other local Trust reserves. He has been a recorder of local notable flora, as well as fauna for many years across Trust reserves in Cambridgeshire. All these efforts and hard work were greatly appreciated.

Charles came forward, received his books and expressed his thanks. He then shared his memories of Oliver Rackham during his time at Cambridge. He left to a round of applause.

John Woollett has been the warden for Storton's Pits for the last 25 years, helping with both management and monitoring during this time. The reserve would not have been kept in such good ecological condition without his efforts. Through his ringing talents, we also now had a far better understanding of the birds at Storton's Pits. John's willingness to share knowledge with other volunteers and with the public was very much appreciated. As John retires from this post, good wishes and thanks were expressed for everything he has done.

John came forward, received his books and then expressed his thanks. He accepted the award on behalf of all the volunteers at Storton's Pits and shared his memories of bird ringing during his time as warden there. He left to a round of applause.

The **Jon Smith Award** was constituted in 2017 in memory of the Trust's much loved and former Great Fen Restoration Officer, a passionate conservationist who sadly died in 2013. This Award is intended to recognise volunteers who had gone the extra mile in their work for the Trust, having a significant impact on a particular aspect of the Trust's work. This year the Trustees decided to make two awards.

Alex Watkin-Child has been involved with the Wildlife Trust since the start of the Young People's Forum in early 2022. He takes his position on the Forum very seriously and is always well prepared for meetings. Alongside Forum activities, Alex litter-picks in his local area, contributes to wildlife communications in the Trust by sending photos for social media and articles for newsletters, and advocates for wildlife at his school. Alex is a very positive person and a great role model for other young people.

Alex came forward, received his books and then expressed his thanks. He praised how welcoming and helpful the Trust staff have been, and thanked his uncle, and his parents for their support. He left to a round of applause.

Frank York has been visiting Summer Leys for a number of years but officially became a volunteer for the Trust in 2023. He has taken on responsibility for the bird feeder station on the reserve, filled up the feeders every day and ensured they were cleaned and well looked after. Frank spends most days at the reserve, often 8 hours plus, tending to the feeders and helping people with recent sightings or other questions. He often helps in the visitor centre too. He is a valued member of the team.

Frank came forward, received his books and then expressed his thanks to everyone at the Trust, and particularly to the staff at Summer Leys. He left to a round of applause.

The President stated how important it was to the Trust to reward its volunteers, particularly the ones like Barbara, David, Sian, John, Charles, Alex and Frank, who had put so much into the Trust. The President said that it went without saying that each and every one of the Trust's volunteers were greatly valued and thanked them for the hours they spent supporting the Trust and their passion for its work. Without them the Trust would not be able to achieve half of what it does.

18. Any Other Business

The President advised that no questions had been received in advance of the AGM.

The President then asked if there were any questions from Members in the room.

Martin Baker expressed his wish to speak in memory of George Cottam, who sadly passed away in July 2024. He spoke of George's inspirational work as part of Hunts Local Group, which George chaired for two periods, in addition to his role as warden of Brampton Wood. He praised George's fundraising abilities as second-to-none, describing the thousands of pounds that he raised. He concluded that George was an outstanding person and volunteer and was dearly missed by all who knew him.

The President ended the Annual General Meeting by thanking everyone for joining and thanked Michael Allen for his help since his presidential nomination, and for all the work he has done. This was met with a round of applause.

The Annual General Meeting closed at 13:00.