

MINUTES OF THE 38th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE LONDON WILDLIFE TRUST

Held at The Linnean Society of London, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London, W1J 0BF

Thursday 26th September 2019 from 6.15 to 8.00 pm

Attendance:

Members (excl. Trustees)	67
Trustees	9
Staff members	12
Total	

Proxy votes:

Invalid	0
To the Chair	86
To another	0
Total	86

Welcome, introductions and apologies:

Members were welcomed by Elaine Sullivan, Chair of Trustees, who introduced the honorary officers, mentioned recent developments including the £1m grant for Brilliant Butterflies, 'Keeping it Wild' reaching younger Londoners from more diverse backgrounds, and the new visitor centre at Camley Street. The Chair thanked members for their support. The immediate priority is to maintain stability on the board, but several candidates have put themselves forward for future board vacancies and Elaine will meet them in the autumn.

Apologies were received from Stuart Wetherly, Hon Treasurer.

1. Introduction of the AGM Formal Business

Stephen Snaith (Hon Secretary) introduced the formal business of the meeting.

2. Minutes of the 37th AGM

The minutes were accepted as a true record by a show of hands from members and signed by the Chair; there were no votes against or abstentions.

3. Presentation and approval of Audited Accounts for year ended 31st March 2019

Ruth Chambers read a report from Stuart Wetherly (Hon. Treasurer) summarising the accounts for the last financial year. Net income increased by £144k; projects funds increased by £143k to £756k of which the largest element was the build-up of funds for Camley Street. Total unrestricted Funds reduced by £14k to £865k; unrestricted net current assets increased by £6k to £91k – still a modest figure, and we are focused on increasing it but in a sustainable manner. Membership remains critical and we are looking at options on how we might best facilitate this. Our nature reserves endowment fund increased by £15k to £515k as a result of returns on the underlying investment.

Two questions from members on the accounts:

Why are we not changing to ethical bank eg Cooperative? We are in the process of reviewing our banking arrangements, for ethical consideration and to ensure the best value for money.

Why do we accept funding from Thames Water? Thames Water are a long term funder. We acknowledge that some of their businesses are challenged at times re leakage targets etc but the organisation is changing to address these issues. Their investments in conservation (such as allowing LWT to manage Walthamstow Wetlands for nature) are genuine and significant and should not be seen in any way as 'greenwash'.

It was agreed that the annual report would be made available to members in advance of the AGM in future.

The hon sec proposed that the accounts be approved; this was seconded by Iona Joy and approved by show of hands, with no votes against or abstentions.

4. Appointment of Auditors

The hon sec recommended the continued use of Crowe UK LLP as the Trust's auditors. This was approved by a show of hands, with no votes against or abstentions.

5. Election of new Board members

A change to the LWT Memorandum and Articles was proposed to allow trustees' terms to be extended by one year after the end of their second three-year term, a maximum of twice, was proposed by Stephen Snaith and seconded by Elaine Sullivan and approved by show of hands, with no votes against or abstentions. The M&A will be amended accordingly.

"Notwithstanding the provisions of articles 38 and subject to the provisions of article 41, a Director whose term of service would end pursuant to article 38, may have his or her service extended for a further term of one year, in exceptional circumstances and subject to recommendation by the Board and the provisions of article 33. His or her service may be extended twice, in this way (but not for the avoidance of doubt, on any further occasion)."

The full board was also approved by show of hands, with no votes against or abstentions. Iona Joy and Ruth Chambers will be extended by one year under the new provision. John Twedde was elected for a second three-year term.

6. Any other business

CEO and Chair emphasised that they welcome questions at any time in the year by email. They took a number of questions from the floor, including:

What is our prognosis on membership? At present we have 8,500 memberships (over 13,000 members), with annual attrition running at 5-6%. Recruiting is expensive; but we have a good track record, and are in discussions with a funder who is interested in funding a new membership campaign to increase membership to circa 20,000 over time. Collaboration with other wildlife charities on membership is not felt to be practicable.

Could we offer children's memberships (might be of interest to grandparents)? The minimum monthly gift is £2.50, which we feel is affordable.

It was suggested that we offer a discounted 'volunteer membership' for volunteers. The Trust has considered this in the past but decided not to.

The figure of 1,600 children attending sessions at CWG seems very low? This is the figure for formal education sessions, which are limited by time and resources; and for one site only.

We ran education sessions for 8,000 children across London in 2018-19, and many more children visit with families - total visitor numbers in 2018-19 were around 750,000.

Could our magazine include a suggestion that members who are moving away from London join the local Wildlife Trust? Yes, this will be done.

Are our corporate funders one-off or regular, and could we do more to publicise their contribution? Some of each; and we are looking into this.

Would we consider becoming a CIO to avoid having to submit returns to both the Charity Commission and Companies House? We will look into this.

What are we doing about climate change risks to our nature reserves? We have a climate change strategy (currently under review), and policy (reviewed twice since 2010), and this is covered in reserve management plans. The policy will be available shortly on the new website.

Why is the AGM being held in central London, on a weeknight? Some members cannot easily attend weekend AGMs; and if it is to be held on a weekday evening, then it has to be in central London to allow people to travel home. We intend to mix weekend and weekday AGMs in future.

Close of Formal Business at 7.08 PM

Members' conference

- Review of the year by Mathew Frith, Director of Conservation – an overview of LWT activities, policies, achievements, opportunities and challenges in 2018-19.
- History of the wildlife trust movement by Stephanie Hilborne, CEO of the Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts since 2004, and an LWT volunteer in 1981.