

# Minutes from Essex Wildlife Trust Annual General Meeting

10.00am, Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> October 2020

Online webinar



**Essex**  
Wildlife Trust

## Introduction

CEO Dr Andrew Impey welcomed all attendees to the first Essex Wildlife Trust digital AGM meeting. He highlighted the sustainable benefits of holding an AGM remotely and then introduced the President of the Essex Wildlife Trust, Professor Jules Pretty who would act as a speaker and the chair, presiding over Business of the Annual General Meeting.

## Speech

Professor Pretty gave a talk about the climate crisis, alerting the attendees to the circumstances spanning over merely one generation of the population. The Professor talked about the carbon in the atmosphere and how it has reached a 'tipping point'. He suggested that if we all reduced our carbon footprint by a factor of 1/7<sup>th</sup>, we could reduce the pressure on the planet to acceptable levels. Professor Pretty suggested several behavioural changes, that we could all commit to, to reduce our carbon emissions and these ranged from reducing the amount of meat we eat, buying organic and local produce, not using the car (or buying an Electric Vehicle), to reducing the amount of flights we take. He recommended that we positively partake in activities that do not affect the planet, such as taking a beach walk, watching a sunset, enjoying wildlife and planting a tree. He suggested that this positive lifestyle is a benefit to us and he referenced the 'social capital' of volunteering. He made note that buying stuff made people less happy than simple pleasures like sharing a meal, nature and togetherness. His final message was to urge people to start the journey to low carbon living and to choose activities that offer natural harmony with the planet.

## AGM Business

The President of the Essex Wildlife Trust and Chair for the AGM welcomed members to the 61<sup>st</sup> Annual General Meeting.

## Apologies

Apologies were received from Members and these were published on the website. They included: Sir Bernard Jenkin MP, Robert Morgan, Phyllis Gibson and Mr L Weston.

## Ordinary Business

- 1. Members were asked to accept the Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> October 2019 at Abberton Reservoir, as a fair representation of the meeting.**

Automated polling was added to proxy votes and the following votes were counted

**462 Votes For, 22 Abstentions and 0 Against**

The motion was carried, and the 2019 minutes were accepted as a true record.

- 2. Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

- 3. Consideration of the Impact Report of the Board of Trustees for the Year 2019**

Professor Pretty commended the Impact Report to members.

- 4. Consideration of the Financial Statements of Essex Wildlife Trust Ltd for the Year 2019**

The Honorary Treasurer, Bob Holmes, reported on the Trust's 2019 income and expenditure, which were both higher than the previous year. He explained that the financial statement also recorded changes in the

value during the year of the Trust's long-term investments and pension liabilities. Investment markets were depressed at the end of 2018 but bounced back in early 2019 and continued to rise during the year.

Overall, it was a positive year as total funds increased by £2.8m to almost £30m, partly as a result of big increases in grants, donations and legacies. A grant for the redevelopment of the Langdon Nature Discovery Centre was included in this figure. The Treasurer thanked those members who had donated by way of a legacy.

The Trust's trading companies, Essex Wildlife Sales and the consultancy company, EECOS, provided the biggest source of income and there was a relatively small, but nonetheless important increase in membership income as member numbers grew.

More was spent in 2019 on reserves and conservation. The Treasurer noted that the amount spent in these areas is an indicator of how well the Trust is doing in achieving its charitable objectives. Costs of purchasing items for sale in Nature Discovery Centres and related staffing costs were also higher, but the trading companies' activities made a net contribution of £0.5m, representing approximately half the operating surplus of the Trust.

The Trust's balance sheet showed a lot of value was held in fixed assets and long-term investments (which are managed by professional investment managers, Sarasins) but that there was also almost £3m in cash and short-term investments at the end of 2019.

The Treasurer explained the use of restricted funds for specific designated causes or projects and general funds, worth £4.5m in 2019 which could be spent more freely, including when needed for special circumstances, such as the pandemic. Through 2020, while some staff were able to continue to work from home, around 70 had been furloughed. Although government support has enabled the Trust to continue paying wages in the current year, both regular income and expenses will be down. However, the Trust remains in a sound financial position, thanks in no small part to the continuing support of the membership.

The Treasurer reported that the auditors had issued an unqualified report on the financial statements, which the Board of Trustees approved in July. The completion of the audit during lockdown represented a major achievement by all concerned. Mr Holmes proposed that the resolutions of receiving the Impact Report and audited Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2019 should be taken together.

Members were asked to receive the Impact Report and the audited Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2019

Automated polling was added to proxy votes and the following total votes were counted  
*477 Votes For, 6 Abstentions and 1 Against*

**The motion was carried and members agreed to receive the Impact Report and Financial Statements.**

#### **5a. Appointment of Auditors**

#### **5b. Auditors' Remuneration**

Members were then asked if they agreed to re-appoint Moore Kingston Smith as auditors and authorise the Board of Trustees to determine their remuneration.

Items 5a and 5b were voted together.

Automated polling was added to proxy votes and the following total votes were counted  
*476 Votes For, 6 Abstentions and 1 Against*

**The motion was carried, and it was agreed to re-appoint Moore Kingston Smith and that the Board of Trustees would authorise their remuneration.**

#### **6. Election of Trustees**

Malcolm Hardy stood for re-election. Bob Holmes and Michelle Wall having been co-opted stood to be formally appointed. The following trustees stood for election: Sarah Balser, Catherine Hawkins, Thoko Kaime, Naomi Kingston, Elin Simonsson and James Wren.

The vote to accept all trustees to the Board was taken together.  
Automated polling was added to proxy votes and the following total votes were counted  
**457 Votes For, 18 Abstentions and 2 Against**

The motion was carried, and it was agreed to approve all trustees standing.

## **Special Business**

### **1. Appointment of Scrutineer**

Penny Carter was recognised for her role as Scrutineer and it was proposed that Essex Wildlife Trust should re-appoint her as the Scrutineer for the forthcoming year in order for her to count and oversee the voting for the 2021 AGM.

Automated polling revealed the following votes

**107 Votes For, 0 Abstentions and 0 Against**

The motion was carried, and Penny Carter was accepted as scrutineer for a further year.

## **Informal Business**

### **Responses to Questions**

Dr Impey addressed a wide variety of questions, either sent in by email or post and also during the Webinar. Dr Impey promised to publish the questions and answers on the Essex Wildlife Trust website.

### **The Ray Marsh Award**

The CEO announced that this year's 'Ray Marsh' award for volunteering goes to John Thorogood for 50 years of volunteering for the Trust. Images were displayed, showing John being presented his award (socially distanced) by People Support Development Manager, Kelly Osborne at the Iron Latch nature reserve.

The meeting ended at approximately 11:30 am