

DRAFT

**Cornwall Wildlife Trust
Annual General Meeting
Held at Lostwithiel Community Centre
on 28th September 2024**

156 members were present.

1. Welcome

Oliver Blount (OB), Chair of the Board of Directors for Cornwall Wildlife Trust (CWT), welcomed all (and particularly the Patrons in the audience) to the Annual General Meeting (AGM) at 2pm and introduced the AGM panel. OB outlined AGM etiquette, specifically how the meeting would be conducted and the process for voting, noting that if any questions were raised, where possible these would be answered during the AGM. If not, questions would be considered at the next Board of Directors meeting on 12 December 2024 and answers published on the CWT website. Lostwithiel Community Centre housekeeping was explained, noting facilities and fire procedures.

2. Formal Apologies for absence

Clare and Jan Hicks.

3. Minutes of the AGM held on 19 October 2023

A **VOTE** was held to approve the minutes of the last AGM held on 19 October 2023.

Proposed: OB Second: GS VOTE: Approved by a clear majority

The minutes were accepted as a true record and will be signed accordingly.

4. Matt Walpole, Chief Executive, gave an Overview of Cornwall Wildlife Trust 2023/2024

MW presented a summary and key highlights of the Trust's work and achievements over the course of the previous financial year 2023/2024 (**slides now on website**).

One major event during the year had been the completion and launch of the new 2030 strategy for nature recovery in Cornwall, comprising of four main objectives – to Demonstrate and Inspire; to Support and Advise; to Engage and Mobilise and to Campaign and Advocate.

MW talked through each objective, particularly mentioning significant improvements over the year on the reserves at Helman Tor and Bartinney; the Farm Advice service and Upstream Thinking Project as well as work with fishers and local businesses; the work of Cornwall Environmental Consultants Ltd (CEC) which contributes directly to CWT's income, achievements and impacts; engagement with volunteers, community groups and the public; destination reserves; advocacy for the issuing of licences for 'pingers' on fishing boats, and the CWT general election campaign, hustings and the relationships built with the elected MPs.

A key area of focus is the Tor to Shore project which aims to connect the nature reserves at Helman Tor, through the farmers and landowners of the Par catchment and out to the critical subtidal habitats of St Austell Bay.

MW emphasised that none of the Trust's work would be possible without the staff, the amazing work of the 1400 volunteers, or the continued support of the generous and committed members.

4. Raoul Humphreys, Treasurer - the Trust's financial performance for the year ending 31 March 2024

After giving a brief introduction, RH stated that whilst in previous years the accounts were presented to the AGM for approval, the Governance review identified last year that this is no longer appropriate as it is the responsibility of the Board of Trustees to approve the accounts in Company Law. Therefore, as was the case last year, some key points relating to the financial performance would be provided for information only. RH assured members that there would be full access to the financial information including the statutory accounts and financial overview in the final audited accounts report. As soon as these documents are signed-off they will be available on our website.

Bishop Fleming are carrying out the audit for the second year running. The fieldwork is complete and the draft accounts are currently being reviewed. Final sign-off is scheduled for committees prior to the end of the year in order to meet statutory deadlines and at this point there is no expectation that they will materially change before signing-off and publishing.

RH then talked through the figures representing the group accounts, being Cornwall Wildlife Trust and its trading arm, CEC. A series of slides (**now on the website**) were presented on income, expenditure and the balance sheet which shows that the Trust is in a strong, stable position.

The general fund balance at the close of the year stood at £1.372m against our minimum reserves target level of £701k, which represented 4 months of unrestricted budget. At year end, there was also within designated funds £508k of unallocated funds available and the Board believe this is a solid position to enable the ongoing operation of the Trust and to act as an enabler for our strategy to 2030 launched earlier this year.

RH noted that the income demonstrated a real commitment and loyalty from members. Also of note were the thousands of hours of voluntary time, for which RH thanked the volunteers.

6. Re-election of Trustees

Gill Saunders (GS), Secretary, introduced herself and thanked leaving trustees Stafford Sumner and Dan Cooke who had contributed a great deal to the Board and would be missed.

Elections were announced as follows –

Richard Stokoe for a 1st term

Proposed: GS

Seconder: Paul Rice

VOTE: Approved by a clear majority

Veran Vere Hodge for a 1st term

Proposed: GS

Seconded: Paul Rice

VOTE: Approved by a clear majority

Nick Wylie for a 1st term

Proposed: GS

Seconded: Paul Rice

VOTE: Approved by a clear majority

Raoul Humphreys for a 2nd term

Proposed: GS

Seconded: Paul Rice

VOTE: Approved by a clear majority

7. Pre-Meeting Questions from members

Gill Saunders explained that the Trust had not received any pre-submitted questions and therefore the floor was opened to questions which were asked as follows: –

1. John Tredwell:

The literature implies that there won't be open questions, which seems defensive.

Reply – The intention is not to appear defensive, so apologies for that. The reason charities have a 'pre-sent questions' arrangement is that a lot of members can't attend and we don't want to exclude them. We also want to be able to answer as fully as possible. The wording can be changed in the future to make it clearer.

2. Tricia Finney:

I am worried about some woodlands in Penryn – they're college woods in a tiny valley and I wondered if they are temperate rainforest.

Reply – We can and do respond to planning applications where necessary. If we chat afterwards I can get the details from you.

3. Wendy Dowse:

I have recently become semi-disabled and walking is difficult. Are there easily accessible paths on the reserves?

Reply – MW mentioned destination reserves earlier in the meeting. We will be making these as accessible as possible. We have a leaflet which shows the current accessibility of each reserve.

4. David Bickerman:

Regarding the join up of nature, the Par River catchment is good. Lostwithiel has a gap in woodland extent. Are there any plans to close it?

Reply – We had a particular focus on woodland recovery and restoration on our land in the West Looe River catchment as part of our rainforest project. Where we are advising other landowners, we can't be prescriptive.

5. Adam Drew:

Please can you say more about what CWT is doing to maximise engagement with different sectors of our society?

Reply – We have recently completed the Nextdoor Nature Project in partnership with Cornwall Neighbourhoods for Change, who work extensively with disadvantaged communities and who are also involved with our Tor to Shore project. We have a funding proposal to help to engage young people across Cornwall. It is our intent to be as inclusive as possible and to engage many different groups of people.

6. Dave Thomas:

I want to say a big thank you to Ruth Williams (previously Head of Marine Conservation and a speaker earlier in the programme of events for today) for all the work she's done in the marine quarter. It's good news that she is continuing the good work nationally.

Reply – (A round of applause for Ruth).

7. Tom Howard:

It's good news that you're engaging with farmers. I see more and more industrial farming around which is not sympathetic to nature. Is it difficult to engage them?

Reply – You're right. We also have tenant farmers on some of our land. We sit and talk to farmers of all kinds, but there is an important peer-to-peer influence too. There are some good examples out there of nature-friendly farming and the trick is to use them to influence others. Our farm advisors have got to know the Penwith local farmers very well having built up close relationships over years.

8. Liz Burrows:

Does the Trust have a view about the desalination plant proposed at St Austell?

Reply – (MW described SWW's proposal which is intended to help secure freshwater security going forwards). We put in a holding objection to the initial drilling proposal, based on the potential impact on seagrass and maerl, and our approach is always based on the available evidence. We have been carrying out surveys to determine the extent of these habitats in the bay. We are engaging SWW on how they can mitigate the impact. We are asking them to make a very clear case for the development, to properly consult locally, and to demonstrate and secure evidence that the construction and the ongoing work of the plant would not negatively impact the marine habitats. We will publish a position statement on the website shortly (link now available [here](#)).

9. Wendy Dowse:

How are we controlling the beavers that arrived at Helman Tor?

Reply – We are monitoring and observing them initially. If we need to put management in place, we can; there are a lot of techniques that can be used. We're also ready to support other landowners who may be affected. We won't enclose the beavers and would like to bring them under our licence application, get them health-checked to ensure there are no disease implications and perhaps introduce other pairs.

10. Philip Hills:

There is a lost opportunity at King Edward Mine for people to see where Upstream Thinking are based. It is essential to get volunteers involved with the Trust's work and there has to be community engagement.

Reply – That is a very important point, thank you.

GS advised that there would be more time for questions after the meeting.

OB closed the formal AGM meeting at 1.45pm and thanked the team, the Board of Trustees and the members, without whom the work could not be done.

The meeting was followed by a presentation from Callum Deveney – Impact in Action: The Story of Change at Windmill Farm, and the Volunteer Awards.

DRAFT