

DRAFT

**Cornwall Wildlife Trust
Annual General Meeting
Held at Hayle Academy
on 27 September 2025**

Panel: Oliver Blount (OB), Gill Saunders (GS), Raoul Humphreys (RH), Matt Walpole (MW)

113 members were present, plus 17 guests.

1. Welcome

Oliver Blount, Chair of the Board of Directors for Cornwall Wildlife Trust (CWT), welcomed everyone to the Annual General Meeting (AGM). He introduced himself and expressed his pride at Matt Walpole joining CWT, the clear strategy and the work of the entire Board. OB introduced the AGM panel and outlined how the meeting would be conducted and the process for voting. He noted that if any questions were raised, where possible these would be answered during the AGM. If questions required a more in-depth answer, they would be considered at the next Board of Directors meeting on 11 December 2025 and the answers published on the CWT website. Hayle Academy housekeeping was explained, noting facilities and fire procedures.

2. Formal Apologies for absence

Canon Geoff Almond, Dee Reeves, Jonnie Taylor, Helen Banks, Tim Bown, Merlin Hanbury-Tenison, Jo Coumbe, Paul Rice, Rosie Woodroffe and Richard Stokoe.

3. Minutes of the AGM held on 28 September 2024

A **VOTE** was held to approve the minutes of the last AGM held on 28 September 2024.

Proposed: OB Second: GS VOTE: Approved

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 2024/2025

Matt Walpole presented a summary and key highlights of the Trust's work and achievements over the course of the previous financial year 2024/2025. Last year was the first full year under the 2030 strategy. We cannot do it all alone, we need to get more and more people taking action for nature.

MW discussed objectives against each of the four 2030 strategy objectives - One: Demonstrating & Inspiring, Two: Supporting & Advising, Three: Engaging & Mobilising and Four: Campaigning & Advocating.

MW explained the organisation's values which are: Passionate & Inspiring, Knowledgeable & Authentic, Inclusive & Enabling, and Focused and impactful.

Looking forward to the current year, there is a dedicated growing membership, who are committed to the organisation.

There is huge ambition for and real focus on key initiatives – the 50-year project to restore and create temperate rainforest; a South coast project collaboration with other wildlife trusts; a West Penwith long-term moorland initiative and the wild beaver release.

We are in a strong place but can do a great deal more.

(all AGM slides will be available to view on the website).

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

Raoul Humphreys introduced himself and stated that in today's difficult climate it is phenomenal that CWT has over 50 nature reserves that people can access and where nature thrives.

RH talked through some high-level points for the financial year that ended 31 March 2025:

The Board had approved the accounts at their meeting on 25th September. RH gave credit to Bev Lawrence (Director of Operations) and the finance team. Francis Clark (new auditors for this year) had been able to produce a positive audit completion report with only minor points raised. The figures shown today represent the group accounts – CWT and its trading subsidiary, Cornwall Environmental Consultants (CEC). The full set of accounts will shortly be on the CWT website.

RH presented an income summary. He noted the fantastic volunteers whose 1000s of hours' worth of time is invaluable and cannot be reflected in this income.

Expenditure summary - 85p in every pound raised is spent on delivering for nature.

Balance sheet - Charities always try to set a level of general reserves/unrestricted funds to hold at any one time. CWT's is set at four months' worth of unrestricted expenditure. We are holding more than that currently.

The accounts are in a healthy position but there will be spending over the coming year to create spaces where nature will thrive, including refurbishing the Allet HQ and nature reserve.

6. Re-election of Trustees

Gill Saunders (GS), Secretary, introduced herself.

Elections were announced as follows –

Amie Fulton for a first term

Proposed: GS

Seconder: RH

VOTE: Approved by a clear majority

Ian Greaves for a first term

Proposed: GS

Seconder: RH

VOTE: Approved by a clear majority

Meg Hayward Smith for a first term

Proposed: GS

Seconder: RH

VOTE: Approved by a clear majority

Jo Coumbe for a second term

Proposed: GS

Second: RH

VOTE: Approved by a clear majority

Merlin Hanbury-Tenison for a second term

Proposed: GS

Second: RH

VOTE: Approved by a clear majority

Paul Rice for a second term

Proposed: GS

Second: RH

VOTE: Approved by a clear majority

Louise Thomas for a second term

Proposed: GS

Second: RH

VOTE: Approved by a clear majority

Rosie Woodroffe for a second term

Proposed: GS

Second: RH

VOTE: Approved by a clear majority

Karen Burrows for a third term

Proposed: GS

Second: RH

VOTE: Approved by a clear majority

7. Pre-Meeting Questions from members

Gill Saunders confirmed that there had been the opportunity to put questions to the Board or the CWT team in advance. The Trust had received pre-submitted questions from two members.

Sue Netherton's email was read out as follows:

'I am putting forward this question with a certain amount of regret because I am, and always have been, a lover of all things natural. However, I do so as a Countrywoman, with a lifetime of acquired knowledge over my 76 years and wish to challenge the notion that 'Rewilding' is always the best way forward to achieve nature diversity.

For your information I also belong to the following organisations besides CWT:-

RSPB, BTO, CBWPS, Cornwall Butterfly Conservation, Friends of Kilminorth Woods and National Trust.

Here is my question:-

Restoration or Obliteration?

Is the project at West Much Larnick the restoration of a previous rainforest or obliteration of 1,000 years of farming in a country with a rising population?

Is it moral to reduce food production in a temperate area of our planet when millions of people in Africa face food shortages because of climate change?'

Noting that there had been previous correspondence on this matter, GS passed the question to MW for reply. MW responded that this was an important question in a world where we are faced with multiple challenges including nature loss, climate change and food security. Climate change and food security cannot be addressed without ensuring a functioning ecosystem. The Government has set out its strategy and so has Cornwall with the recently launched Local Nature Recovery Strategy. Every ounce of our resources is put into nature conservation and restoration, as at West Muchlarnick, and we must do that responsibly. It would be irresponsible to take out prime productive farmland. Where the land is not so productive, it is sensible to use it for other restoration. The problems of climate change and food security are caused by far

greater impacts, such as competing land use and development, overuse of chemicals and loss of soils, food waste in the supply chain and we need to tackle those too. We do not believe it has to be a case of either nature or farming. We work with farmers to improve productivity and healthier soils. We use livestock on our own reserves and they feed into the food chain in Cornwall. It is a challenge and as a wildlife charity we think long and hard about this and believe we are on the right path.

Sue Netherton asked to respond to MW's comments and said that she has visited temperate rainforest in other parts of the world and questioned whether it could realistically be recreated on that scale in Cornwall. She went on to ask if a vote could be taken on whether the four fields opposite Polteana in Duloe could be removed from the project.

MW explained that there will be planting on the land referred to. There is a formal process by which approval is obtained and that process is underway. CWT has a mission within the context of a functioning set of rules. The science points to West Muchlarnick being the right place to recreate temperate rainforest and a positive outcome is hoped for.

GS responded to the request for a vote to be held. From a governance perspective, it is not possible under CWT's articles to call an immediate vote from the floor. There is provision for calling a vote with prior notice to the full membership for approval. GS said that she would write to Sue to explain the governance procedures around it.

The second question received was from Simon Richardson who was not present at the meeting. His question was read out as follows:

'Noting that Cornwall Wildlife Trust (CWT) have not renewed the agreement with Anthony Estate for management of Churchtown Farm in Saltash, also that CWT are negotiating their withdrawal from the small reserve adjacent to Tincombe Park.

Would the board outline their policy for South East Cornwall reserves?

Is CWT selling or withdrawing from leases on any other sites in South East Cornwall?

Does CWT intend to maintain a Reserve Officer, or Ranger, dedicated to CWT sites in South East Cornwall?

For clarity, in this email, South East Cornwall refers to the area covered by Parliamentary constituency of South East Cornwall.

If this definition of South East Cornwall does not align with CWT roles and policy please use the vice county designation, as used by recording centres, "2 East Cornwall".

If CWT uses a different area definition for this part of the county would CWT clarify?'

OB acknowledged the question put to the Board and explained that the non-renewal of the leases had been previously brought to the Board and was approved.

In terms of the strategy for southeast Cornwall, Callum Deveney (Director of Nature Recovery) responded. The CWT boundaries, which are divided into West, Mid and East, do not match constituency boundaries. Staff capacity in the southeast of the county will be maintained as although particular sites will no longer be managed, other areas of land will be taken on. It is unusual for CWT to withdraw from land. The leases on these sites had ended. Having looked

at those sites and how they matched up with the strategy, it was clear that the resources would be better transferred to other areas. The sites are being handed back to landlords who will continue to manage them for wildlife, nature and people.

There were no further questions from the floor.

The **END OF THE FORMAL BUSINESS** was followed by the Volunteering Awards and a presentation by Cheryl Marriott on Cornwall Wildlife Trust's plans for wild beaver releases in the Par and Fowey catchments.

OB closed the meeting by thanking the CWT team, the presenters, the Board of Trustees and the membership. He ended with a plea to the membership that in order to achieve the goal of 30% of land and sea protected for nature by 2030, we cannot be party political. Nature recovery is more important than that.

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