

**Cornwall Wildlife Trust
Annual General Meeting
Held at the Burrell Theatre, Truro School
on 19 October 2023**

36 members were present.

Oliver Blount (OB), Chair of the Board of Directors for Cornwall Wildlife Trust (CWT), welcomed all to the Annual General Meeting (AGM) at 7pm and introduced the AGM panel. OB outlined AGM etiquette, specifically how the meeting will be conducted and the process for voting, noting that if any questions are raised, where possible these will be answered during the AGM. If not, questions will be considered at the next Board of Directors meeting on 14 December 2023 and answers published on the CWT website. Truro School housekeeping was explained, noting facilities and fire procedures.

OB moved on to:

1. Apologies for absence

Elizabeth Trevan, Christine Smith, Michael Wigley, Mike and Ali Broome

2. Minutes of the AGM held on 20 November 2021

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

Matters arising from the minutes of 24 November 2022

None.

Proposed: OB

Seconder: GS

Approval: Approved 69%

4 abstentions

7 no vote

3. Matt Walpole, Chief Executive, gave an overview of Cornwall Wildlife Trust 2022/2023

MW presented a summary of the highlights of the Trust's work and achievements over the course of the previous financial year 2022/23, followed by some updates on the Trust's work over the summer and reflections on future direction (slides now on website).

Our work on Land –

There was a tremendous response to our land purchase appeal, enabling us to buy an additional 97 acres adjacent to Helman Tor. This will allow more wildlife to thrive and key species such as beavers and large herbivores to be introduced to create important habitat. Our farm advisors have been out in force engaging farmers to enable better management and improve water quality and biodiversity.

Through our Upstream Thinking project, we provided more space for nature through both habitat restoration and new habitat creation. We were also able to help farmers to access significant funding to enable them to undertake nature-friendly farming.

There has been lots of activity throughout the year on our Nature Reserves across Cornwall, where we look after over 5.5k acres of land and some 5 miles of watercourse. This work included installing a kilometre-long deer fence for woodland regeneration at our reserves in the Glynn Valley, hedge laying in Churchtown Farm near Saltash, a 6.18-acre wildflower meadow created at our Allet HQ, 13 new ponds created in west Cornwall and many acres of scrub clearance on our mid Cornwall reserves to create more open and diverse mixture of wetlands and drier areas. All of these habitats support a wide array of insects, birds, mammal and reptiles.

Our Christmas appeal raised over £25k to help us continue with badger vaccinations and other mammal work. 2022 was a record year for badger vaccinations, taking the total to over 800. Our partners at ZSL are looking to secure further funding to expand this work with new groups of farmers.

2022/23 also marked five years of the Cornwall Beaver Project, which has had an amazing impact – if you haven't been on a beaver walk at Woodland Valley Farm, I would highly recommend it.

Our work at sea –

We launched a pioneer seagrass restoration project that you'll be hearing more about later. Through our marine monitoring work, we also discovered one of the largest known seagrass beds in the UK, in St Austell Bay.

Elsewhere our Seaquest, Seasearch and Shoresearch citizen science groups undertook hundreds of dive surveys and shoreline monitoring. This included reports of almost 2000 sightings of marine wildlife including multiple species of dolphins and whales. This kind of data collection is vital for our conservation work and helps raise public awareness of our marine environment.

Work with Cornish fishermen and fisheries continued, keeping the Cornwall Good Seafood Guide up to date with 66 fisheries recorded as sustainable. It's not all good news though – you may have seen the reports from the beginning of the year that Cornwall's brown crabs are no longer rated as sustainable in the Guide because of declining stocks due to unregulated harvesting. The Guide helps people in Cornwall to make informed choices about the fish and seafood they buy. And our choices do make a difference.

Our work in the community –

Nature will only thrive in Cornwall if more people take action, and much of our work is about engaging people and helping them to do just that.

Last year over 14,000 people attended our 450 events, including families and children. Our Your Shore programme connected with 6000 young people in Mounts Bay through schools and community events. Building on this we were delighted to launch the Mounts Bay Marine Trail this summer, with information and activities for all along its route from Newlyn to Marazion.

But it not just coastal communities we work with – 2022 saw the start of an important new programme of community activities in the Redruth and Camborne area along with the continuation of our G7 legacy work supporting communities in clay country in mid Cornwall.

Our team of volunteer speakers delivered talks in villages across Cornwall, and early in the year we held our first public panel discussion with high profile speakers, on the topic of the '30 by 30' target for nature recovery. This looks set to become an annual fixture in our calendar, after we ran a follow-up early this year on the topic of re-wilding.

Last year we also took another new step, raising our voice in response to government proposals that would have watered down environmental protections. We asked our members, supporters and the wider public to defend nature by contacting their MPs and councillors to voice their concern.

A brief update on the year to date –

Over the summer we have built on last year's achievements in some bold new ways. Having secured the additional land near Helman Tor last year, this summer we began the process of habitat improvement with the addition of three Oxford Sandy and Black pigs, that are busy rooting up the turf. We will soon be adding Tamworths along with longhorn cattle, each doing a different job to increase habitat diversity and allow space for a greater range of plants and animals to thrive.

Similarly at Penhale Dunes west of Newquay we have undertaken major dune notching, to bring back more bare sand that's important for several dune specialist species.

In the marine realm, we are expanding our engagement with a wider range of stakeholders through a new 'three-Cs' initiative - Championing Coastal Communities, that we have secured funding to roll out. We are excited to say that wildlife sightings have increased, including the marsh harrier.

Going forwards –

We will soon be launching our new strategy to 2030. We have bold ambitions to secure a future with more nature everywhere; from landscape recovery in Penwith to farms and county wildlife sites on the Devon border; from the top of Helman Tor to the shore of St Austell Bay; from the nature reserves we look after to the villages, towns and parishes where people live.

Our focus will be on helping more people take action for nature. We'll be doing our bit for nature recovery through our own conservation work, demonstrating to others what's possible, and supporting, encouraging, educating, inspiring, and influencing as many people and organisations as possible to make nature recovery a reality.

There will be a little more about our strategy in the next issue of Wild Cornwall magazine in November, with a full launch in the New Year.

Our thanks to our members and funders.

4. To consider the accounts and the reports of the auditors for the year ending 31 March 2023, Raoul Humphreys, Treasurer presented the Trust's financial information (slide now on website) after giving a brief introduction.

RH said: I have been a Trustee for nearly two years and Treasurer since April of this year. I was born in Cornwall and grew up in St Ives and have spent most of my life working here and raising a family. I am a very active amateur naturalist with a wide range of interests and spend a lot of time out in the field in West Cornwall. I'm passionate about our wildlife and its recovery and feel very lucky to have access to nature on my doorstep.

In the context of being treasurer, I am a qualified Chartered Accountant and have many years of public sector, charity and private sector business experience.

In my role as Treasurer, I will give an overview of the Trust's financial performance for the 12 Months ended 31 March 2023.

RH then reminded members that whilst in previous years the accounts have been presented to the AGM for approval, our Governance review identified that this is no longer appropriate as it is the responsibility of the Board of Trustees to approve the accounts under Company Law.

RH assured members that they will have full access to the Trust's financial information including statutory accounts and a financial overview in the Trust's annual report. As soon as the accounts are signed off, the documents will be available on the Trust's website.

RH noted that this year has also seen a change in our auditors from Robinson Reed Layton to Bishop Fleming. The audit fieldwork is substantially complete but the final sign off on the accounts is scheduled for the end of this month.

Moving to the financial overview and a concise summary of the results, RH reiterated that these have been audited and there is no expectation at this point that they will materially change before sign-off and publishing.

The figures represent the group accounts, the group being Cornwall Wildlife Trust and Cornwall Environmental Consultants.

RH explained that one important factor to note, when making comparisons between the two years is the that, for administrative simplicity, the year end was moved from February 2022 to March 2022 making the previous figures for 2021-22 a 13-month year. This now aligns with the Financial Year of many of our key donors and our project reporting deadlines.

A slide of the summarised version of the Statement of Financial Activities was presented on screen, the equivalent of a Profit and Loss account and balance sheet.

RH pointed out the highest-level headlines: the Trust had a successful financial year exceeding our plans for income over expenditure and in increasing our general funds to give a strong position on unrestricted reserves.

The balance sheet has strengthened, and fixed assets have risen, largely due to the significant investment in the acquisition of Creney Farm.

Key points to note from income:

- Donations and legacies, which also includes membership fees saw an increase in the year, which directly correlates to members and supporters remaining loyal and committed to Cornwall Wildlife Trust and for that we thank you;
- The Trust managed to secure over just under £1.7m extra funding to support its charitable activities;
- The Trust undertook its biggest ever appeal and gained external funding support to secure the purchase of Creney Farm;

The extra income enabled Cornwall Wildlife Trust to deliver more work across Cornwall. Costs of work on charitable activities was £4.15m during the year of which:

- Almost £1.5m was spent on conservation work on land;
- Almost £300k was spent on conservation work at sea;
- £2.4m was sent on conservation work on our own nature reserves.

The largest projects in nature conservation were Penwith Landscape Partnership, Kernow Glassa, Upstream Thinking and the G7 Legacy Project.

CEC's work makes a great environmental contribution and in addition delivers a profit that helps fund the work of Cornwall Wildlife Trust. This means that over the last 30 years CEC has now donated over £1 million to the Trust helping protect Cornwall's wildlife and wild places.

The overall net movement in funds was a positive increase of just over £1.8m

On the balance sheet the impacts beyond this surplus are a significant increase in fixed assets of £1.7m – the most significant element of this being the acquisition of Creney Farm. An increase in



net current assets of just over a million largely representing the increase in cash and debtors from project activity.

To also note, a significant increase in longer term creditors of just under £900k, the largest factor in that representing the Patient Loan that a major donor made to enable the purchase of Creny farm. The good news is that the Trust will have repaid this within the current financial year 2023/24.

Funds (also sometimes referred to as financial reserves) within which the key element is the Trust's general funds or free reserves of the charity. At just under £1.5m compared to just under £1.2m last year, the Trust holds a positive position against our minimum target level of £610k. The Board believe this is a solid position to enable the ongoing operation of the Trust.

Looking forward, it places the Trust in a good position to support the new strategy to 2030. That concludes my Treasurers Report, Thank you.

5. **Approval of an amendment to the Articles of Association**

Gill Saunders (GS), Secretary to the Board presented the Special resolution for approval:

You are being asked to vote on the following proposed Special Resolution, an amendment being a cross-referencing correction only.

Under Chapter 2 of Part 13 of the Companies Act 2006, the directors of the Company propose that the following resolution is passed at a general meeting as a special resolution (Resolution).

THAT with effect from the conclusion of the meeting the articles of association of the Company be amended by deleting and replacing the following new article:

26.3. The minimum number of directors shall be 10 and shall be limited to a maximum of 15 subject to article 26.2, not 27.2

Proposed: GS

Seconder: RH

Approval: Unanimous 100%

6. **Re-election of Trustees**

RH introduced the elections as follows –

Oliver Blount, Chair – for 2nd term

Stafford Sumner – for 2nd term

Gill Saunders, Secretary – for 3rd term

Proposed: RH

Seconder: Paul Rice

Approval: Unanimous 100%

7. **Pre-Meeting Questions from members**

Gill Saunders (GS), Board Secretary explained that the Trust received 4 pre-submitted questions, 3 of which have been replied to and the fourth is currently the subject of further discussions between Professor Scott and the Trust, but all questions and replies will be read out. GS presented the questions and replies as follows –

1. **Peter Wills:**

I would like to attend the AGM, but I am trying to cut my carbon footprint and wondered if it might be possible to attend online.

Reply – The Trust is trialling an in person only AGM this year after 3 years via zoom to encourage everyone to come and meet staff and Trustees but will consider other options for future AGMs.

2. Jean Smith:

Thank you for the invitation to the AGM. Is it possible that there will also be zoom coverage? I do not like driving at night but am interested to hear the achievements of the CWT over the past year.

Reply – as above but to add that the Board will take account of all questions in future consideration.

3. Elizabeth Trevan:

Prior to Covid I was one of a team of volunteers who delivered the magazine by hand. Now the worst of Covid is behind us thanks to vaccinations, have the trust considered returning to hand delivery. Myself and possibly many others would be happy to return to helping in this way as it saved the trust a considerable amount in postage. Failing this, has the trust considered publishing the magazine electronically. This would not only save a huge sum in printing and delivery costs, but also be far more environmentally friendly.

Reply - During the first lockdown of the COVID pandemic, Cornwall Wildlife Trust put the hand delivery of our Wild Cornwall magazine members on hold, instead mailing each edition for the protection of our volunteers and members. As restrictions were lifted, it was decided to continue to post Wild Cornwall. The decision was not taken lightly and was based on a number of factors including research across other Wildlife Trusts (all of whom had moved away from hand delivery prior to COVID) and an assessment of what offered the best experience to our members, without whom our work would not be possible.

Mailing the magazine enables us to personalise accompanying communications, tailoring the content depending on our members' relationship with us, specific interests, and local area. Other benefits have included: being able to guarantee the dates of delivery; the reduced risk of people missing their magazine should a volunteer be unable to carry out delivery due to personal reasons (such as sickness, unexpected commitments etc.); and reduced staff capacity, volunteer health and safety and administrative requirements.

Our hand delivery volunteers were an incredible team, helping spread the word of Cornwall Wildlife Trust to our members. Their hard work and dedication to the Trust has been remarkable and we remain incredible grateful for their support, delivering magazines in all weather and literally going the extra mile to help.

We hope hand deliverers continue to stay involved with Cornwall Wildlife Trust as we continue to review and develop our relationship with members. Current volunteering opportunities can be found on our website.

4. Peter Scott:

The Cornwall Geoconservation Group (CGG) is an integral part of CWT and has been since the Group's formation as the Cornwall RIGS Group in 1991 (RIGS: Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites). The Group has a broad remit in monitoring the county's world-famous geodiversity, but a major part of its work is to identify, propose and maintain the County Geology Site (CGS) network. There are 130 sites so far. These are equivalent in status to County Wildlife Sites, the two designations forming the 'Local Sites' system. This information comes under the remit of a service level agreement between CWT and Cornwall Council. Designated CGSs are recognised by Cornwall Council as relevant to making decisions in planning matters and the Group is a planning consultee. Through its volunteer professional geoscientist members, the Group also advises CWT on other issues in

Cornwall relevant to geodiversity and its link to biodiversity. Geodiversity provides the foundation for biodiversity to exist.

Currently, the Group receives a very small amount of professional staff-time support from CWT. This is essential for us to operate and to provide credible professional advice to Cornwall Council that has the backing of CWT. We have been made aware that this support is to be withdrawn next year. We ask why this is being done, given the strategic nature of the Group's work within CWT in protecting Cornwall's geodiversity and geological heritage. We ask if the Trustees are aware of this decision as without professional support to facilitate its integral role within the Trust, the Cornwall Geoconservation Group cannot continue to exist.

Reply - A review is currently underway of the arrangements in place between the Trust and all the voluntary groups that have historically operated under a form of 'affiliation' with the Trust. This review was initiated at the request of the Board, following my consideration as Secretary to the Trust of a number of governance issues that followed on from our overhaul of the Trusts Objects and Articles last year.

By way of background, the Cornwall Geoconservation Group is the only affiliated voluntary group to receive paid-for staff support from the Trust to facilitate its administration and operation. The reasons for this are rooted in the history and evolution of the Trust.

As the Trust prioritises its resources in line with our emerging new strategy, it is important that we have looked to regularising the Trust's relationship with Cornwall Geoconservation Group and to align it with the arrangements with other affiliated groups. To that end, the decision has been taken that it is no longer appropriate to allocate paid staff time to the running of the group. The Trust will continue to work closely with the group on matters of mutual interest, including in relation to information on County Geology Sites in the context of the local authority planning process, and to support the group as it transitions towards self-organisation.

This decision has been communicated to the trustees and by the Chief Executive to Professor Scott in his role as Chair of the group, both in writing and during a meeting at which next steps and follow-up were agreed.

8. Any other business

OB thanked several Trustees who had left the Board during this financial year – Mark Woodbridge (Treasurer), Fred Currie and Lucy Jewson. OB noted that Charlie David would be stepping down at this AGM and thanked Charlie for his long service to the Trust both as a Trustee and as a member. GS presented Charlie with a gift from Trustees.

Dee Reeves offered her thanks to the Board, staff and team on the amazing work the Trust has achieved this year.

9. AGM Closed

OB closed the AGM and announced the presentation and Q&A by Ruth Williams – Protecting Cornwall's Seagrass, to be followed by the Volunteer Awards. OB noted that refreshments will be served in the Lily room upstairs afterwards, with the opportunity to meet staff and Trustees.