

**Minutes of the 52nd Annual General Meeting
of the Scottish Wildlife Trust, held on
Saturday 24th September 2015 at
The National Museum of Scotland,
Chambers St, Edinburgh EH1 1JF**



Introductory remarks

The Chairman, Robin Harper, welcomed everyone to the Scottish Wildlife Trust's 52nd AGM.

Apologies

Apologies were received from Dr Tim Duffy, David Lindgren, Margaret Morton and Vivian Wilson.

- 1. To approve minutes of the 51st Annual General Meeting of the Scottish Wildlife Trust, held on Saturday 19th September 2015 at The New Lanark Mill Hotel, 1 New Lanark Mills, Lanark ML11 9DB.**

The minutes were formally approved as a true and accurate record.

Proposer: Karen Chambers

Seconder: Tony Cameron

There were no matters arising from the Minutes.

- 2. To receive the Council's report and accounts for the year ended 31st March 2016.**

The Chairman reported that the start to his first year as Chairman had been immensely enjoyable and took a moment to thank the staff, his fellow trustees and all of the members and volunteers for their support during the year. He then invited Jonathan Hughes, Chief Executive Officer, to give a more detailed insight into some of the achievements from the previous year.

Jonathan Hughes (JH) thanked the Chairman and proceeded to highlight the following points:

- The Trust secured better protection for Scotland's seas as part of the Living Seas project by helping to bring about a ban on scallop dredging in the Wester Ross Marine Protected Area following a survey of rare maerl habitat.
- The Trust also made significant achievements in terms of community engagement within the project, reaching 200 school children in the Wester Ross area equipping the next generation with the knowledge of how to protect our marine environment.
- The Trust organised the second World Forum on Natural Capital in Edinburgh, attracting almost 600 delegates from 45 countries. The conference was a huge success and JH gave his congratulations to the team for their efforts.
- The Natural Capital Standard was developed to enable housebuilders to reduce their impact on the environment. This piece of work was based on ideas developed by the Trust on ecological urbanism and it was in the final draft stages at year end.

- v. The Trust helped protect important places for wildlife by positively influencing over 30 significant planning applications in addition to delivering another successful planning workshop and providing support to Local Groups and planning volunteers.
- vi. The Trust influenced the Land Reform Bill, with key amendments on deer management accepted by the Scottish Government.
- vii. A successful event was held at the Scottish Parliament highlighting the risks posed by neonicotinoids to bees and led a campaign that resulted in 780 people writing to their local MSPs.
- viii. The Trust continued to demonstrate partnership working through its Living Landscape projects and mobilised 13 landowner and community groups to cement the Coigach Assynt Landscape Partnership Scheme including plans for a £1 million investment in native woodland expansion.
- ix. Official approval was received of a Heritage Lottery Fund grant for CALLP. The partnership still had match funding to raise but this was huge boost and enabled projects to start happening on the ground such as woodland expansion.
- x. The Trust's pioneering conservation grazing project was extended to restore meadowland on Bawsinch and Duddingston Loch Wildlife Reserve in Holyrood Park, Edinburgh.
- xi. An innovative bunding technique was used to restore peatlands at the Trust's Cander Moss Wildlife Reserve in South Lanarkshire and the Peatland Code was launched at the World Forum to an international audience.
- xii. A new osprey pair at Loch of the Lowes successfully fledged three chicks.
- xiii. The Trust continued to manage its 120 wildlife reserves with the help of 18 reserve volunteer groups and around 40 volunteer conveners - protecting 250 nationally important species and habitats.
- xiv. A record-breaking 85,632 pink-footed geese were recorded at Montrose Basin Wildlife Reserve and more than 400 tonnes of non-native trees at the Falls of Clyde Wildlife Reserve.
- xv. The Trust delivered environmental action plans for three local wildlife sites which were developed by 45 local young people and volunteers as part of the Cumbernauld Living Landscape.
- xvi. The Trust reached over 6,500 people at events and supported four interns/trainees and 36 volunteers.
- xvii. The Trust continued to engage with young people and enthused hundreds of children through the Wildlife Watch programme. Six new Groups were established this year, bringing the total to 32 across Scotland.
- xviii. Over 57,500 visitors were inspired at the Trust's four visitor centres and the Trust helped 27,900 people to connect with nature through a programme of walks, talks, open days and public events.
- xix. The Trust welcomed almost 80 school groups to the Jupiter Urban Wildlife Centre in the heart of industrial Grangemouth. Jupiter was to celebrate its 25th Anniversary in 2017.
- xx. Around 1,000 volunteers delivered more than 44,000 hours of volunteer time across a wide range of the Trust's work. And as ever, the Trust had invaluable support from its 22 local groups delivering talks, walks and local conservation and passed the 40,000 member mark for the first time in its history
- xxi. A fundraising appeal was launched to help more communities join the battle to save Scotland's red squirrels – and received initial support from the Heritage Lottery Fund.
- xxii. The Trust was bequeathed more than £340,000 from gifts in Wills which helped fund vital management of the reserve network. JH said that the Trust simply would not function

without the support of its members, volunteer and donors and expressed his gratitude for their dedication. He also took a moment to thank the Trust's funders and partners for their continued support.

JH then gave an overview of the Trust's financial situation, highlighting the following points;

- i. The 2015-16 accounts comply with the new Statement of Recommended Practice – FRS 102.
- ii. The Statement of Financial Activities and the Balance Sheet are more concise with increased detail contained in the notes.
- iii. The pension liability is now shown on the balance sheet resulting in the restatement of financial reserves and an impact on the financial results as repayments to the pension scheme became a cashflow rather than a revenue item.
- iv. The largest project continues to be Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels.
- v. Overall the Trust made a small surplus of £8,380 during 2015-16 with free funds balance of just over £1m which is in the middle of the target range for financial reserves and supports ongoing activities against unforeseen events.
- vi. During the year, the Trust transferred ownership of its joint venture - Ben Mor Hydro – to an independent company. This decision transfers the risk whilst the Trust and local community each retain entitlement to 12.5% of future net income.

3. To re-appoint the Auditors to the Trust, Geoghegans, 6 St Colme Street, Edinburgh, EH3 6AD.

The Chairman asked the members to approve the re-appointment of Geoghegans as the Trust's auditors for another year.

The re-appointment of Geoghegans as the Trust's auditors for the year 2016/17 was approved.

4. Election to Council

The Chairman reported that two members of Council were eligible for re-election:

- Alastair Grier and David Lindgren

The Chairman confirmed he was delighted that both individuals put themselves forward for re-election to the Trust's Council. Their skill, experience and professionalism had contributed hugely and the Trust was extremely fortunate to have them both.

Two nominations to Council had been received:

- James Campbell and Colin Macintosh

Since no objections were received all four candidates were elected to Council.

The Chairman recorded his congratulations to the newly elected trustees. The Chairman informed members that Dr Tim Duffy and Professor John Harwood were stepping down after the AGM. He thanked them both for their valuable service and wished them well for the future.

5. Any other relevant business

As no notifications of any other formal business had been received, the Chairman formally closed the Annual General Meeting at 11am.

Footnote:

Please see Appendix 1 for a summary of the presentation and informal question and answer session.

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Appendix 1 - Questions

Question and Answer session

The Chairman invited questions on any aspect of the Trust's work in the financial year under review or questions on any other relevant subject:

Several were received as follows:

Questions:

- a) *Charles Pfeil enquired as to what could be done to re-inforce the EU Nature Directives should Scotland leave the EU as was likely.*

Answer: Susan Davies, Director of Conservation (SD) confirmed the Trust was concerned about the implications of leaving the EU and would be looking for commitments from the Scottish Government to the EU legislation already in place. Parts of this legislation had previously been adopted into Scots Law and the Scottish Wildlife Trust would be building the case for the rest to be transposed. SD confirmed the Trust and other NGOs would be required to keep the pressure up on the Scottish Government and ensure that this valuable and robust legislation was not lost as this would have wider implications on science and restorations funds. David Ashford remarked that Alan Smyth, SNP, MEP, had been very sympathetic to this end in a recent meeting and he suggested that the Trust seek to connect with him for support in the future. Robin Harper echoed SD's comments stating that the Trust would be ensuring that they are providing the Scottish Government with the information needed to keep the Nature Directives in place. Dr Maggie Keegan (MK), Head of Policy, added that she and Jo Pike (JP), Director of Public Affairs, had recently met with Mike Russell (MR), Scottish Government Minister in charge of handling Brexit. She said that the Trust has a good working relationship with MR and the meeting had been an opportunity to reinforce the importance of the environment in the debate. The meeting had been encouraging and MR had requested to be kept informed of the Trust's thoughts and opinions. The key message from the Trust was that the UK as a whole consider the implications of Brexit on the environment.

- b) *Margaret Jarvis asked what the Trust was doing to engage more with teenagers and young people and if there was any link established with programmes such as the John Muir Award.*

Answer: JP reported that there were pockets of engagement with teenagers and cited the new Wildlife Watch Group at Moray which was comprised of teenagers as a good step forward with this hard to reach age group. She added that the speaker in the afternoon was the Deputy CEO of Young Scot, Alison Hardie who would have more to say on this subject.

RH said that he saw the tenure of discussions of eNGOs working with landowners and the NFU as a powerful way forward and this had to be considered part of the equation. James Ivory remarked that farmers were under a lot of pressure currently and in a considerable amount of debt. The percentage of the retail pound that farmers receive was at an all-time low co consumers enjoy

cheaper food. He suggested that if the farmers received a higher percentage of the retail pound they would be more amiable to work with the environment.

c) *Henry Thompson asked how best to react with land management in the face of climate change and cited flooded peatlands and felled conifers as examples of bad practices which contributed to the severe flooding in Carlisle in the past year.*

Answer: SD stated that the most important task was to increase recognition and a range of stakeholders need to understand catchment scale change. She added that NGOs should be looking towards partnership schemes to carry out work at the catchment scale. Henry Thompson followed up by noting the situation of the water supply on Arran where the presence of conifers on the hills reduced run off. He asked whether we were depriving ourselves of land management tools. JH replied that the idea of nature based solutions was increasingly powerful, not just in terms of climate change adaptation but also mitigation. The land use sector was responsible for a large percentage of carbon emissions and in order to tackle this problem we would need to fundamentally change the way that we manage our land. Can we, in the future, use nature to make land more resilient but at the same time use landscapes to sequester and store carbon? JH added that the Trusts' policy team were currently working on flooding and had gathered a lot of evidence. The restoration of Scotland's uplands was a top priority for the Trust in the near future as Scotland would be entering unknown territory in post Brexit vote years.

d) *A question was raised over the Trust's policy on rewilding and the reintroduction of the lynx and the wolf.*

Answer: JH said that the Trust had not majored on the advocacy concerning the reintroduction of the lynx as the priority had been to focus on beavers however the Trust's policy since 2011 was support for lynx reintroductions back in Scotland as there were many potential ecological benefits associated with lynx.

e) *Hugh Ingram noted that Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) gave substantial funding to the Trust and also provided other services as well. He expressed his concern that SNH were finding it increasingly difficult to provide assistance in his local area recently due to a shortage of funding. As this was a serious issue he asked what the Trust could be doing to assist.*

Answer: SD stated that this was an important point to make and confirmed that in the last year or so SNH had seen cuts and that in fact cuts had been made across the portfolio of the Scottish Government and that unfortunately there were likely to be further cuts. She added that the Trust along with other eNGOs could take action by agreeing clear messages with which to communicate to the Scottish Government on the value of SNH. SD said that the Trust was working on proposals which SNH would be able to submit in order to try and secure existing funding and if possible gain further funding.

f) *Peter Dreghorn wished to announce the start of a new project, Restoring Annan Waters (RAW), and noted there were leaflets with information on the project available at the AGM. He*

suggested that as there was a lot of activity going on in the area it would be great to have a new Local Group in Moffat.

Answer: RH said this was significant opportunity and JH added that it was at the heart of the Trust's vision to work at an ecosystem level and that this project was exactly what was needed across Scotland. JH said he would welcome the creation of a Moffat Local Group and added that this should come from the grass roots up but the Trust would do whatever it could to support its creation.

g) Marliese McLean asked whether the decline of Scotland's puffin population could be attributed to the use of sand eels in the fertiliser industry.

Answer: Sam Colin (SC), marine Planning Officer for the Trust, confirmed that sand eels had been highlighted as a priority marine feature by the Scottish Government which would hopefully have a positive impact on population densities, it would remain to be seen whether this would affect puffin populations. Kenny Taylor, trustee and Chair of North of Scotland Local Group, stated that it was too simplistic to link the use of sand eels as fertiliser with the decline of puffin populations and said the marine environment was undergoing more radical changes than any other environment and that the effects of global warming were already viable at the marine scale. He added that work could be done to help support puffin populations by eradicating ground based predators such as rats which was being undertaken on the Trust's reserve, Handa Island but much of what the true impacts of climate change on Scotland's seabird's populations remained uncertain.

h) A question was asked with regard to the Trust's position on burning of grouse moors.

Answer: SD confirmed that the Trust was calling for better regulation and licensing systems on grouse moors and had called for a moratorium on the culling of mountain hares. She added that the Trust was engaged in the process and would like to see, for example, cutting of heather rather than burning of grouse moors and were currently discussing such approaches with the Moorland Forum and others.

i) Jennifer Read remarked at she had sighted young mink in her garden in Edinburgh for the first time and requested an update on the status on mink in Scotland.

Answer: SD confirmed there were pockets of mink populations around the country and also pockets of mink trapping activity. She encouraged members to engage with the voluntary scheme and their local fisheries trusts who would be interested in sightings. JH added that the recovery of the otter was important in terms of mink populations as with pine martens and grey squirrels, the recovery of native keystone species could have positive impacts on controlling non-native species. Dr Andrew Young asked if there were currently trapping schemes on the water of Leith. Pat McKerrow recommended that any sightings of mink near the water of Leith should be reported to the Water of Leith Conservation Trust who were carrying out monitoring of numbers based on reported sightings.

j) Tom Harwood asked what lobbying the Trust had been carrying out in terms of the illegal killing of raptors.

Answer: SD replied stating the Trust was working through The Partnership for Action Against Wildlife Crime (PAW Scotland) and had been pressing for stricter prosecutions and sentences for convictions of wildlife crime. She said the previous Minister for the Environment, Land Reform and Climate Change had commissioned work in this area and the new Cabinet Secretary would be taking this work forward.

RH said there were very few Wildlife Crime Officers and more funding needed to be invested. Allan Bantick informed the meeting that he had held a very productive meeting with the Wildlife Crime Officer for Highlands and Skye who was a very enthusiastic full time officer who also had part time officers to assist him and that this was cause to be encouraged. Tracy Lambert (TL), Cumbernauld Living Landscaped Project officer, reported that she had begun work with Police Scotland to protect badgers and needed assistance with locating sets. She requested that any members with any information on badger sets in the Cumbernauld area pass this information along to Police Scotland or the Trust.

k) *Margaret Jarvis asked if enough co-ordination was going on between Scotland's conservation organisations though Scottish Environment LINK.*

Answer: JH said that the Trust worked very effectively in networks and held a standing position on the LINK board, currently occupied by Head of Development, Lucy Graham, and also worked with several LINK groups such as the Marine Group. He added that the Trust was involved in other networks including The Wildlife Trusts (TWT) and the International Union of Nature Conservation (IUCN) on an international scale and that these networks were used very effectively. JH said the Trust also worked in partnership with other environmental NGOs such as RSPB and with a wide range of organisations though the Living Landscapes projects.

l) *James Muirhead asked what densities of deer would constitute as too high and remarked that more Scottish venison should be made available for consumers. Could the Trust investigate the possibility of the creation of a tariff to help farmers?*

Answer: Maggie Keegan (MK), Head of Policy, reported that she had recently been informed that Scotland was importing venison from Germany and she had brought this up in discussion with Mike Russell, MSP. She said the Trust would continue to advocate for sustainable deer management, and investigate the venison market.

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