

Minutes of the 2021 Annual General Meeting of Radnorshire Wildlife Trust

Held at the Metropole Hotel and by Zoom, Thursday 23rd September 2021

Members present (at Metropole): Charles & Joyce Austin, Nondus Banning-Boddy, Gafyn Blakeway, Jenny Chryss, James Davies, Richard Dean, Bob Dennison, MT Gibson-Watt, Elsa Harflett, Edmund Hayward, Paul Heaton, Bronwen Jenkins, Doreen Knight, Pam Knight, Chris Ledbury, Judith Lloyd-Thomas, Stephen & Judy Mullard, John Oliver, Dawn Parry, Clive Payne, Heather Price, Hilary & Richard Rimington, Steve Simmons, Bill Stow, Carole Taylor, & Ray Woods. *(29 members)*

Known Members present (via Zoom): Julian Gibson-Watt

Non-members present: Andrew Jones (Auditor), Dewi Roberts (Guest Speaker)

Staff in attendance: Silvia Cojocar, Deri Griffiths, Darylle Hardy, James Hitchcock, Chloe Jackson, Emma Morgan, Sally Morris, Lucy Morton, Rob Podmore, Jonathan Stone.

Jenny Chryss (Chair) thanked everyone attending and welcomed the Trust President, Julian Gibson-Watt, who was joining in by Zoom, and Andrew Jones the Trust auditor in the flesh.

1. Apologies

Helen Barnes, Colin & Jennifer Beard, Elaine & David Blackman, Phil & Sue Bowen, Ros & David Coles, Nicola Colston, Bob & Barbara Edwards, Jennie Edwards, Jenny Fox, Vanessa Garwood, Barry Hardiman, Christine Hugh-Jones, Nina Laborde, Cathryn Morgan, Yvonne Parker, John & Caroline Parkinson, Gareth & Lynden Rees-Roberts, Derek & Chrissy Sampson Rosemary Stow, Richard & Gaynor Tyler.

Jenny Chryss (Chair) thanked everyone attending and welcomed the Trust President, Julian Gibson-Watt, who was joining in by Zoom, and Andrew Jones the Trust auditor in the flesh.

2 Minutes of AGM on 24 September 2021 and Matters Arising

The minutes were agreed unanimously and there were no matters arising.

3 Chairman's Report and Annual Report of Council

Jenny said that the past year had been one of growth, expansion and change. She was extremely grateful to Chris Ledbury, the previous Chair, for all he had done to leave the Trust in a robust and forward-looking position. Council had been strengthened during the year by the co-option of Dr Stephen Simmons who ran his own environmental consultancy.

Also during the year, Darylle Hardy had decided to step down as Trust Director. Darylle had shown great determination and resilience in getting a number of our current projects off the ground and we were very grateful to her. Fortunately, she was continuing as Project Leader for the Green Connections project, which was an exciting initiative involving three Trusts. Our other new projects were covered in the Annual Report. Along with new legacies, they had allowed us to increase our staff considerably. Jenny emphasised the importance of legacies as a vital source of core funding.

James Hitchcock had joined us in February from Herefordshire Wildlife Trust and had wide experience in the Trust movement. One of his early initiatives had been to launch the eNewsletter, which was proving very popular. Under his leadership the Trust had also helped to lead a campaign on Wye pollution and was participating with Cardiff University in a Citizens' Science project to monitor and understand the sources of this pollution.

Sadly, Council would be losing two Trustees. Jenny Fox was stepping down after three years in which she had been a great asset to the Trust. Fortunately, she would continue to help us on communications issues. Heather Price would leave at the end of 2021 after eight years as Hon. Treasurer. We were extremely grateful to Heather for everything she had done to keep our accounts up-to-date, accurate and in the black. Members present joined Jenny in thanking them both for their invaluable contribution.

Jenny continued by noting that the Trust was contributing actively to a new strategy for The Wildlife Trusts movement. We would draw on this for our own new strategy which we were working on at present. This year had seen the merger of Wildlife Trusts Wales with the Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts. But there would continue to be dedicated staff to influence the Welsh Government, NRW and other national bodies on behalf of all the Welsh Trusts.

Jenny said that she might have ended there but for an exciting new development - the very recent purchase of a 164 acre farm at Pentwyn near Llanbister Road, adjacent to our reserve at Cnwch Bank and close to our reserves at Tylcau Hill and Fronwen Wood. This had only been possible with a very generous loan. It gave us a great opportunity to work at scale to restore nature, working closely with the local community, and to tap into new sources of funding. We had also been promised help from RSWT. In response to a question, James said he expected to draw on help from the Tuesday Volunteer Group and perhaps to attract new volunteers interested in the project and site.

Finally, Jenny celebrated the fact that we had now surpassed 1000 members, one of the highest members per head of population of any Trust. She thanked Trustees, volunteers, staff and members for all they had done to make this a very successful year despite the challenges of Covid.

In response to a question about where we wanted to be in 5 years time, James highlighted three key aims: to make the most of the fantastic opportunity offered by Pentwyn; to “crystallise success” in our suite of current projects; and to continue to play our part in highlighting the problems of pollution in the Wye catchment and to work for its restoration to health.

4. Treasurer’s Report and Accounts

Heather Price explained that charity accounting requirements did not make it easy to follow the accounts. In particular, expenditure on capital equipment appeared on the balance sheet, rather than the expenditure column, which meant that the bottom line was misleading. Although income and expenditure for this year looked very similar to the previous year, in practice they were made up very differently. We had expected a very quiet year because of Covid but had actually seen a transformation as new projects and grants were approved towards the end of the period. Investment income was also up though this was just a snapshot - there had been a lot of volatility and we kept our investments under regular review. Grant income had increased by about £140,000 whilst legacy income had declined almost as much although we had had five new legacies worth about £65,000. This was very welcome as we needed a steady stream of legacies to help with cash flow and to ensure we had healthy reserves to draw on for activities not covered by project funding. Andrew Jones explained that legacies appeared as income in the accounts when we were first notified of them even though the income might not be received until a subsequent year - this is what had happened with the bequest of a house in 2019-2020 which had only been sold in the financial year under review.

On the expenditure side, there had been an increase in staff to 9 by the end of the period and 16 now. For reasons Heather had explained, the biggest item of capital expenditure - the robomower - appeared elsewhere in the accounts.

Overall, we were in a healthy position with an unrestricted free balance of £880,000, the best ever. To help manage the financial consequences of the growth in the Trust, and the complexity of project accounting,

we had taken on a very experienced Finance Officer on a 2 day a week basis. Heather ended with thanks for all the help she had had from Andrew Jones. Andrew added his thanks to Heather.

There being no questions, **the accounts were approved.**

5 Election of the Trust President

Jenny said that the term of office of the Trust President, the Hon. Julian Gibson-Watt had come to an end. Council recommended that he be re-elected for one year so that his term was coterminous with that of the two Vice-Presidents (whose term expired next year.) Julian had agreed to this and it was **approved unanimously.**

6. Election of Honorary Officers

Ray Woods (Vice-President) took the chair for this item. Jenny Chryss had indicated her willingness to stand again as Chair. **This was agreed unanimously.** Council had nominated Chris Ledbury as Vice Chair and he had indicated his willingness to stand. **This was agreed unanimously.** Council had nominated Edmund Hayward as Hon Secretary and he had indicated his willingness to stand. **This was agreed unanimously.** Council had nominated Heather Price as Hon Treasurer until the end of 2021 and she had indicated her willingness to stand for this period. **This was agreed unanimously.**

Ray commented that RWT punched well above its weight. If anyone could make a success of the Pentwyn project we could. We would need to ensure that it did not distract from effective management of the Trust's existing reserves, but he believed this should be possible. He congratulated all those who had contributed to making this such a successful year.

7. Election of Council

Steve Simmons had been co-opted onto Council in the course of the year and was willing to stand for election. Vanessa Garwood and Pam Knight had come to the end of their three-year terms and were willing to offer themselves for re-election. **These appointments were agreed unanimously.**

8. Appointment of Auditors

Council recommended the re-appointment of Andrew Jones and Co as Trust auditors. **This was agreed unanimously.** Jenny thanked Andrew for all his work for the Trust.

9. Any Other Business

Jenny said that Steve Simmons had been doing a great job in vetting planning applications to see if there were any grounds for the Trust to intervene over concerns about implications for wildlife. He had devised a matrix to help us take a consistent approach. He would however have to relinquish this role soon because of other full-time commitments. We were therefore looking for a volunteer to take over. Jenny asked anyone interested to get in touch with her.

Jenny said we were also looking to appoint a new Hon Treasurer and one other Trustee. The roles have been advertised on the website where more detail is available. Again, she asked anyone who might be interested or who knew potential candidates to let her know.

There being no other AOB items the formal meeting was closed. After an interval, members heard a fascinating and superbly illustrated talk by Dewi Roberts on underwater photography in Radnorshire's rivers.