

Dear Member,

I look forward to welcoming you to our 61st AGM. Due to the success of last year's AGM, we are once again hosting our AGM online. Thank you for understanding our decision, we will be following all relevant government and Charity Commission guidance to ensure everything is carried out correctly. Please don't hesitate to get in touch if we can provide support to allow you to watch the proceedings, details to do so are below.

The AGM includes, importantly, an occasion for us all to celebrate the many achievements of the Trust over the past year. Our Chief Executive, Estelle Bailey, will be giving her full illustrated report, showing the many ways in which, our work continues to benefit wildlife. Following the formal AGM, you are invited to join us to hear from Sunday Times best-selling author Emma Mitchell will be speaking about the positive impact of nature on mental health. We will also be revealing the category and overall winner of the 2022 BBOWT Photo competition.

One of the important functions of the AGM is to consider nominations for the appointment of Trustees. The Board takes very seriously the importance of having the right mix of skills and experience among Trustees to ensure good governance of the Trust. This year, in order to fill an emerging gap, we advertised in the Spring 2022 edition of Wild Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire magazine and more widely for potential trustees with expertise in one or more of the following areas; Campaigning and Advocacy, Senior local government, Digital / IT or Agriculture / land management.

Following its usual procedure, the Nominations Committee first considered written applications from external candidates and those existing Trustees whose term of office was due to end this year but who wished to stand again; it then held two rounds of interviews for those who seemed to best suit our current needs. The Committee recommended to the Board that the following nominations should go forward to the AGM: Mark Chacksfield, Zoe Hancock and Tim Davies (as new Trustees). The Board is pleased to recommend these candidates to the membership.

We also have four retiring Trustees: Jane Cotton, Ian Davidson, Chris Mees and Mike Pollard On behalf of everyone at BBOWT, I would like to thank all four of them for their contributions. Their experience and abilities have been invaluable on a board that has overseen and supported rapid and extensive change at BBOWT in the past few years.

We also need to reappoint the President, Steve Backshall and Honorary Vice Presidents, Dr Pam Berry and Martin Spray.

We will be celebrating the importance of our volunteers with a short presentation and recognising some volunteers through our 'lifetime achievement', 'outstanding contribution (group)' and 'outstanding contribution (individual)' awards categories.

This year we are asking that all voting is carried out by proxy and where possible submitted electronically, if you have not done so already, please go online [www.bbowl.org.uk/AGM2022](http://www.bbowl.org.uk/AGM2022) (scroll down to 'voting') and cast your vote. If you require any support or would like to request a paper copy of the proxy form, please email [events@bbowl.org.uk](mailto:events@bbowl.org.uk) or call: 01865 788300 and leave a message for someone to get in

touch to help. All proxy votes must be received by BBOWT at least 48 hours before the AGM.

If you wish to put a question to the Board please submit it in advance using the form that can be found on [www.bbowt.org.uk/AGM2022](http://www.bbowt.org.uk/AGM2022) at least one week prior to the AGM, in order for the Board to be able to provide a full explanation on the day.

I hope you are able to join us on Saturday 8 October.

**George Levvy, Chair**

## **60th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**BERKSHIRE, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE AND OXFORDSHIRE WILDLIFE TRUST**  
(Charity Number 204330, Company Number 680007)

**SATURDAY 9<sup>th</sup> October 2021 AT 10.30 AM**

**Meeting held virtually via Zoom**

### **MINUTES**

**Present** 85 members attended the meeting

**Chair** Joanna Davidson (JD)

JD introduced Graeme Thompson (GT), Honorary Treasurer

Estelle Bailey (EB), Chief Executive

JD noted that due to the ongoing Coronavirus situation this year's AGM was again being held virtually and that members had been asked to vote ahead of the meeting via proxy. 25 proxy votes had been submitted. All items that are required to be 'proposed' and seconded' will be proposed by JD and seconded by GT, except for the re-election of Trustees which will be seconded by Ian Davidson, Honorary Secretary and the proxy votes will be taken as confirmation.

#### **1. Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from; Peter Dawe, Sally Gillard, Michael Juniper, Mick Jones and Trustee Natalie Ganpatsingh.

#### **2. Minutes of the 59th Annual General Meeting, Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> of October 2020**

Proxy votes for 59<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting held on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> October 2020 were as follows: 25 proxies provided, 23 FOR, 0 AGAINST, 2 ABSTAINING APPROVAL

The minutes were APPROVED as a true record of the proceedings and were signed by JD.

*Proposed: Joanna Davidson Seconded: Graeme Thompson*

Matters arising: There were no matters arising

#### **3. Report of the Chief Executive**

The Chief Executive, Estelle Bailey (EB), made her presentation on the activities and achievements of the last year at BBOWT.

EB also highlighted that BBOWT are working in partnership with other organisations and local communities to ensure 30% of land is well managed for wildlife by 2030. BBOWT's continued campaigning against the eradication of badgers. HS2 and the Ox-Cam growth arc are still major concerns which BBOWT are focusing on.

## **Report of the Board of Trustees**

JD reported that since the AGM in October 2020, the Board had met for quarterly meetings in; December 2020 and March, July and September 2021. These meetings had been supplemented by two Away Days in February and May. In addition to these meetings the Trustees had attended a Governance Training session in January. There had been a quorum present at each meeting.

At each *quarterly* meeting, the Board had been presented with:

- a report of the Finance and Audit Committee
- a report from the Chief Executive.

At the *March* meeting

- The Trust's Budget 2021/22 had been approved.

Other issues discussed at this year's meetings had included:

- Complaints Log
- Impact Measures
- Audited Accounts
- Health and Safety Report
- AGM
- COVID-19
- Strategic Plan
- Risks
- Major Projects
- Climate Change
- Safeguarding

### **Major and ongoing projects**

Key projects for the year were: West Berkshire Wild Verges Project, Chimney Meadows Wetland Restoration Project, Hedgerow Havens Project, Wild Bicester, Ash Dieback, Rough Around the Edges, Badger Vaccination Programme, Water Vole Conservation Project, Oxfordshire Local Wildlife Site Project, DEFRA ELM Trial, HLF Covid Funding

### **Land Acquisitions**

Pixey Mead: In October 2018, the Board approved the purchase of the northern half of Pixey Mead, with the generous support of members Robin Buxton and Sally Rankin. We completed the purchase in January 2021.

Ludgershall Meadows: This parcel of three fields was first considered in 2017 but at the time other commitments meant we could not make an offer. In 2020, the land was back on the market and Trustees approved an acquisition. We arranged with Esmee Fairbairn Foundation that they would buy the land on our behalf while we raised our own funds, and the land was successfully purchased in September 2021. We would like to thank everyone who contributed to the appeal, we have been overwhelmed by the sheer volume and generosity of the response of our members.

### **Health and Safety**

The Board receives an annual Health and Safety report and reviews the Trust's Health and Safety Policy on an annual basis. Jane Cotton had acted as the Board's Health and Safety Trustee.

## **Policies and Position Statements**

The Board has a schedule for review of Trust Policies and Position Statements. Since the last AGM the Board had approved the following revised documents:

### **Policies:**

- Terms and Conditions of Employment
- Sabbatical Policy
- Long Service Policy
- Volunteer Policy
- Complaints Procedure
- Safeguarding Vulnerable People Statement
- Environment Policy
- Communications Protocol

## **4. Financial Report for the year ending 31 March 2020**

GT expressed his thanks to Cait Winter, Finance Director and Rachel Powell, Head of Finance for their hard work along with the other members of the Finance team. GT also thanked the Finance and Audit Committee.

GT gave a detailed presentation on the Annual Accounts, noting the key figures. Overall BBOWT's income for the 2020/21 year was £7.0 million, this was the first-time income had reached this level. BBOWT's expenditure had been £6.4 million, an increase of £750k on the previous financial year, mainly due to an increase on expenditure of restricted projects. GT explained that BBOWT's net assets totaled £16.1 million, with the majority of these funds tied up in long term assets or earmarked for certain projects. BBOWT had set itself a minimum target figure for free funds to retain against a potential downturn in its financial fortunes of £1.4m, this is the equivalent to 3 months operating costs. BBOWT's current free funds position was £2.9 million at the end of the financial year, which equates to 6 months operating costs. GT talked about membership which had increased by over 1,500 new members in the past year even after face to face membership recruitment stopped during lockdown. This was mainly due to a move to digital recruitment during this period and an increase in recruitment of members when face to face recruiting resumed. A £300k Strategic Development Fund has been set up to help deliver the new Strategy, providing seed corn funding and investment for projects. Ash Dieback continues to be a significant problem, with further work to mitigate risks planned for the winter.

Proxy votes for the financial report for the financial year ending 31 March 2021 were as follows: 25 proxies provided, 25 FOR, 0 AGAINST, 0 ABSTAINING APPROVAL

The financial report for the financial year ending 31 March 2021 was APPROVED.

*Proposed: Joanna Davidson Seconded: Graeme Thompson*

## **5. The Appointment of Auditors**

GT explained that haysmacintyre were experts in the Charity Sector and that he had been impressed with the service they had provided in 2020/21 and recommended their reappointment.

Proxy votes for the re-appointment of haysmacintyre as the Trust's auditors were as follows: 25 proxies provided, 25 FOR, 0 AGAINST, 0 ABSTAINING APPROVAL

The membership APPROVED the re-appointment of haysmacintyre as the Trust's auditors.

*Proposed: Joanna Davidson Seconded: Graeme Thompson*

## **6. Election of Trustees**

Ian Davidson reported that the Nominations Committee had met to organise and lead the process of recruiting new Trustees to the Board, including a new Chair as Joanna Davidson had announced her intention to step down from the Board. Following a skills audit of the Board, the Trust had advertised for applicants with expertise in one of the following areas; campaigning /advocacy; farming; digital or local government.

After a process of application and interview, the Nominations Committee had recommended George Levvy, Miles Evans and Andrew Bennellick to the Board, with George Levvy proposed as our next Chair

Three current Trustees; Frances Brindle, Graeme Thompson and Jane Cotton had come to the end of their current 3-year term and had applied for a further 3-year term. All three were recommended to the Board for reappointment.

ID confirmed that the Board had endorsed the three Trustees seeking re-election and the three new candidates seeking to be elected as Trustees.

It was proposed the appointment of the three trustees seeking re-election was combined with one vote.

Proxy votes for the re-election of Frances Brindle, Graeme Thompson and Jane Cotton as Trustees were as follows: 75 (25 for each Trustee) proxies provided, 75 FOR, 0 AGAINST, 0 ABSTAINING APPROVAL

The membership APPROVED the re-election of Frances Brindle, Graeme Thompson and Jane Cotton which were *proposed by Joanna Davidson and seconded by Ian Davidson*.

It was proposed the appointment of the three trustees seeking election was combined with one vote.

Proxy votes for the election of George Levvy, Miles Evans and Andrew Bennellick as Trustees were as follows: 75 (25 for each Trustee) proxies provided, 75 FOR, 0 AGAINST, 0 ABSTAINING APPROVAL

The membership APPROVED the election of George Levvy, Miles Evans and Andrew Bennellick which were *proposed by Joanna Davidson and seconded by Graeme Thompson*.

JD added that one Trustee had retired from the Board since the last AGM: Julie Macken, JD thanked them all for their service to the Trust.

EB thanked JD for her time and commitment whilst she had been a Trustee and Chair for BBOWT.

## **7. Re-appointment of Honorary Vice Presidents**

Three Honorary Vice Presidents were coming to the end of their term: Professor Sir Dieter Helm, Audrey Lady Wood and Dr Robin Buxton. All had expressed their wish to stand to be re-appointed. The Board fully endorsed each candidate.

It was proposed the appointment of the three Honorary Vice Presidents seeking re-appointment was combined with one vote.

Proxy votes for the re-appointment of Professor Sir Dieter Helm, Audrey Lady Wood and Dr Robin Buxton as Honorary Vice Presidents were as follows: 75 (25 for each Trustee) proxies provided, 75 FOR, 0 AGAINST, 0 ABSTAINING APPROVAL

The membership APPROVED the re-appointment of Professor Sir Dieter Helm, Audrey Lady Wood and Dr Robin Buxton which were *proposed by Joanna Davidson* and *seconded by Graeme Thompson*.

JD informed the AGM that one Honorary Vice President, Sir Henry Aubrey-Fletcher whose current term ended in 2021 had decided to step down at this year's AGM.

## **8. Any other business**

Members had been asked for questions, to be received 1 week prior to the AGM to allow for them to be answered fully. We have also received some additional questions via the chat function during this meeting. The following questions had been received:

Question	Response
Sydlings Copse is a small, popular and highly bio diverse reserve on the edge of Oxford. Three issues that have arisen in the recent past have the potential to be highly damaging to nature on this site.  1: large scale housing development nearby and a further large extension likely to come very close to the site is currently in the planning process.  2: increased intensity of arable farming on land directly adjoining the reserve  3: recent change of ownership of	1: BBOWT opposed previous developments around Sydlings Copse and the new proposals on top of existing developments in the area would increase the damage caused to the SSSI. We are seriously concerned about the potential impact of the proposed development on the doorstep of Sydlings Copse and will continue to object to it. However, whilst we do not believe that any mitigation could sufficiently address the likely impact of the proposals on Sydlings Copse, in the event the development does go ahead, we will argue for the most robust mitigation and protection of the SSSI possible. Such mitigation would include significant buffering of the site by the creation of new habitats. Such buffering should also help mitigate the impacts of agricultural run-off from the surrounding land. Access to the site would also need to be very carefully managed, with a warden ensuring the site is respected. This mitigation would not prevent damage to the SSSI, only minimise it, which is why we will continue objecting to the proposed development.  2: We hope to significantly influence the land management of intensive agriculture through

<p>the farmland surrounding the reserve</p> <p>Given these potential threats what steps are BBOWT taking to protect the long-term future for nature in Sydlings Copse and in the surrounding area?</p>	<p>BBOWT's new Land Advice Service once it is fully up and running. We are also engaging in partnership work with commercial farming operations with the objective of demonstrating how productive farming and nature conservation can work together.</p> <p>3: Through one of our contacts we are trying to meet the new owners of the fields around Sydlings Copse. At present we are waiting for a response. We will then hopefully work with the new owners and try to encourage and inform them of why this area is so special.</p>
<p>Do you have any contact with Wokingham Borough Council? I have to them repeatedly pleading with them to consider leaving verges and areas of grass uncut. But they continue to mow these areas and have even mown a roundabout known to have bee orchids on it. They appear to have no consideration for the environment or interest in improving biodiversity. Can anything be done to influence their attitude and decisions?</p>	<p>BBOWT are in the process of meeting with senior leaders of local councils to discuss our new Strategic Plan. We will check what contact we have previously had with Wokingham Borough Council and follow up on this question.</p>
<p>I applaud your efforts to engage with landowners but note that you have moved to paid-for advice. How successful has this change been? Do you detect a reluctance to engage as a result?</p>	<p>The Land Advisory Service has been massively successful so far and we are currently appointing more staff to meet the demand. It has been an overwhelming response and with the upcoming Agricultural Bill it will be a great opportunity to develop this further.</p>
<p>How does BBOWT interlink financially with the overall Wildlife Trusts organisation? Like many people I visit WT trusts all over the country and would like a little bit of support to go to them especially in less wealthy areas.</p>	<p>RSWT is one central charity which all 46 wildlife trusts pay subsidies to. RSWT also run central and national appeals. Smaller trusts can access central funds if needed.</p>
<p>How much will rewilding figure in your work ahead?</p>	<p>Rewilding will be discussed further in our Future Plans session at 1pm. Across the 3 counties it is a mosaic landscape and BBOWT has mapped out where we think nature can recover at scale via different approaches, including rewilding. A rewilding project would require BBOWT to acquire a sizeable piece of land.</p>
<p>How do you ensure vaccinated badgers don't get culled by mistake?</p>	<p>BBOWT are unable to ensure badgers we have vaccinated are not being culled, even more so now that culling is taking place near to our vaccination areas. We have contacted DEFRA and are continuously campaigning to stop the culling.</p>

**The meeting closed at 11:57am.**



### **AGENDA ITEM 3 – REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

Estelle Bailey, Chief Executive will present the report to the members.

### **AGENDA ITEM 4 – REPORT OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

George Levvy, Chair, will present the report to the members.

### **AGENDA ITEM 5 – FINANCIAL STATEMENTS AND AUDITORS' REPORT**

Graeme Thompson, Honorary Treasurer, will present the report on the Financial Statements for the year

ending 31 March, 2022 and the Auditors' Report.

### **AGENDA ITEM 6 - APPOINT AUDITORS FOR 2022/23**

The Finance and Audit Committee will recommend Auditors for the year 2022/23.

### **AGENDA ITEM 7 – ELECTION OF TRUSTEE/DIRECTORS TO THE BOARD 2022**

Biographies of the three candidates standing for election. Each of the candidates is recommended by the Board

Mark Chacksfield

Mark originally studied Natural Sciences (Zoology) at Cambridge, and has a lifelong passion for ecology, evolution and the environment. For the past 20 years he has practiced as a barrister with a focus on high technology multijurisdictional patent litigation, in particular in the pharmaceutical, biopharmaceutical and telecoms spheres. He took silk in 1999. He is a Board Member of the ENT UK Foundation, and loves to run, travel (with a limited carbon footprint), good food and music.

Tim Davies

Tim is a conservation scientist with a lifelong interest in wildlife. He studied zoology at university and has been involved in a range of ecological research over the past 20 years: from counting whales and dolphins in the Irish Sea to surveying fish populations in West African rivers. He is an advocate of citizen science, and volunteers with the River Chess Association to monitor the health of his local chalk streams.

Tim completed his PhD in conservation science in 2014 and worked for several years as a consultant, providing advice on conservation and fisheries management to the UK government, the European Commission and the World Bank. He currently works as a technical specialist at the Marine Stewardship Council, a charity that recognises and rewards sustainable fishing.

Tim lives in the Chilterns with his family.

Zoe Hancock

Zoe Hancock is currently the Principal Bursar of St John's College Oxford. In this role she has responsibility for non-academic aspects of the College, including its land holdings. After reading History at Oxford University she trained as a Chartered Accountant and has worked at PwC, Walkers Crisps, the British Museum, and as a Principal and Chief Executive of Oaklands College, a further education college in Hertfordshire. She was Chair of WENTA for four years, a not for profit social enterprise which supports business start-ups.

Jane Cotton, Ian Davidson, Mike Pollard and Chris Mees retire as Trustees this year, BBOWT would like to thank them for their service.

Dr Pam Berry and Martin Spray seek re election as Honorary Vice Presidents and Steve Backshall as President.

#### **AGENDA ITEM 8 – ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

This is when questions that have been submitted to the Board in advance will be addressed. If you have a question please submit it via the form on [www.bbowt.org.uk/AGM2022](http://www.bbowt.org.uk/AGM2022)

A large print version of this document is available on request.

Please telephone 01865 788300 / 01865 775476 or email [events@bbowt.org.uk](mailto:events@bbowt.org.uk)