

Annual General Meeting
Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust
Saturday 14th October 2023, 10am,
The meeting will be virtual and a recording available via:
www.bbowt.org.uk/AGM2023

Berkshire
Buckinghamshire
Oxfordshire



Dear Member,

I look forward to welcoming you to our 62nd 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 AGM, you are warmly invited to join us for a short afternoon session. As well as presenting the awards for the winners of the 2023 Photography Competition, we're delighted to be joined by Professor Tim Lang and Vicki Hird. They're experts in the world of food and food systems, and will talk to us about what we eat, how we produce it, and the critical links between our food and nature's recovery.

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 2023 edition of Wild Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire magazine and more widely for potential trustees.

Following its usual procedure, the Governance and 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: Natalie Ganpatsingh and Gregory Webster (as continuing Trustees) and Garth Clark and Jolyon Austin (as new Trustees). The Board is pleased to recommend these candidates to the membership. There are no retiring Trustees this year.

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.bbowt.org.uk/AGM2023 (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@bbowt.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/AGM2023 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 14th October.

George Levvy, Chair

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1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of 61st Annual General Meeting: 8th October 2022, and Matters Arising
3. To receive and consider the report of the Chief Executive
4. To receive and consider the report of the Board of Trustees
5. To receive and consider the Audit Report and Financial Statements for the year ending 31 March 2023
6. To appoint Auditors for 2023/24
7. To receive and consider proposed changes to Articles of Association
8. To elect/announce the results of the election of Trustees/Directors
9. Any other business **(items to be received one week prior to the meeting)**
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/AGM2023
A large print version of this document is available on request.
Please telephone 01865 788300 / 01865 775476 or email events@bbowt.org.uk

61st ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

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

SATURDAY 8th October 2022 AT 10.00am

Meeting held virtually via Zoom

MINUTES

Present 111 members attended the meeting

Chair George Levvy (GL)

GL introduced Graeme Thompson (GT), Honorary Treasurer
Estelle Bailey (EB), Chief Executive

GL noted that due to the ongoing Coronavirus situation this year's AGM was again being held virtually but next year it is planned to revert back to a face to face AGM. Members had been asked to vote ahead of the meeting via proxy. 31 proxy votes had been submitted. All items that are required to be 'proposed' and seconded' will be proposed by GL and seconded by GT.

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies have been received from: Peter & Jane Freshwater, Dave Hagland, Caroline Jackson-Houlston, Louise & Andrew Blake, Georgina Lomnitz, Lynn Hartshorn, Alastair Hunter, Graham Benjamin, Ian Hay, Michael Juniper, Owen & Alex Wynne, Elizabeth Reupke, Caroline Priday, Ron & Gill Lloyd, Mike Pollard, Chris Mees, Ian Davidson, Sarah Litchfield, and Janet Hill.

2. Minutes of the 60th Annual General Meeting, Saturday 9th of October 2021

Proxy votes for 60th Annual General Meeting held on Saturday 9th October 2021 were as follows:
31 proxies provided, 26 FOR, 0 AGAINST, 5 ABSTAINING APPROVAL

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

Proposed: George Levvy *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. Highlights included BBOWT's plans to extend work beyond nature reserves, working with landowners in the wider countryside which is developing well and growing in numbers and working with a number of large estates on nature recovery masterplans. Future Nature a consultancy, is established and growing in reputation and impact. Team wilder is gathering momentum – more than 150 groups are engaged with BBOWT through the scheme.

In 2023 BBOWT will be launching a fundraising appeal, designed to fund critical work towards putting nature into recovery. A new Meles Philanthropy Circle was launched in 2022 for those interested in supporting BBOWT's work with a substantial regular annual donation.

There are plans to acquire more land for wildlife. Education work will be extended from children to adults and to engage young people. BBOWT are scoping a new nature/visitor attraction near Oxford.

There are challenging times ahead with fundraising and the cost of living crisis. There have also been many announcements under the new government on the growth agenda, with plans to strip out protections for wildlife, which could be devastating. Legislation that protects wildlife is under threat like never before, e.g. through fossil fuel extraction by fracking or oil in the North Sea, abolition of green levies, etc. The new tier of support for farmers is also under threat. It has been a tough year for wildlife particularly due to the searing heat during the summer months

BBOWT's challenge on HS2 continues and a plan will be launched in the Autumn of 2022 to further challenge this disruptive scheme.

EB thanked all the Trustees, Staff and Volunteers for all their hard work and to the members for their generous contributions and support during the past year.

4. Report of the Board of Trustees

GL reported that since the AGM in October 2021, the Board had met for quarterly meetings in December 2021 and March, July, and September 2022. These meetings had been supplemented by two Away Days in January and May.

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.

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Other items discussed at this year's meetings, including standard and significant items included:

- Risks
- Workplan
- Impact Measures
- Trust's Budget for 2021/22
- Audited Accounts
- Health and Safety Report
- Complaints Log
- Accident Report
- Volunteer Committee
- AGM
- Safeguarding
- COVID-19
- Strategic Plan
- Major Projects
- Climate Change
- Carbon Action Plan
- EEDI
- Biodiversity Net Gain
- Future Nature
- Working with Communities
- Fundraising

Major and ongoing projects

The Staff at BBOWT run a Project Board, which meets monthly, to decide on new projects for funding applications and to manage existing projects. The highest value project applications proceed to the Board of Trustees for discussion and approval.

Key projects for the year were: Chimney Meadows Wetland Restoration; #teamWILDER; Ludgershall Meadows; Hedgerow Havens; Ecover Floodplain Meadows Partnership and TWT Habitat Banking Model.

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
- Vertebrate Policy
- Acquisitions Policy
- Use of IT Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Sick Pay Policy
- Annual Leave Policy

- Maternity/Primary Adopter Pay Policy
- Paternity/Secondary Adopter Pay Policy
- Shared Parental Leave Policy
- Time off for Dependents Policy
- Pension Contribution Policy
- Environmental Policy

5. Financial Report for the year ending 31 March 2022

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 2021/22 year was £9.5M, easily the most successful fundraising year to date.

BBOWT's expenditure had been £8M, a £1.6M increase on last year, mainly due to the extra work undertaken on the WEG project, an increase in membership recruitment costs, and a big increase in the trading costs of the visitor centres and cafes. Including restricted, over £5.8m was spent on charitable activities last year. £2.8m on BBOWT reserves, £1.7m on education & awareness and £1.4m looking after the wider countryside.

GT explained that BBOWT's net assets totaled £17.9M, with the majority of these funds tied up in long term assets or earmarked for certain projects. The free financial reserves position improved from £2.9M last year to £3.5M over the last 12 months, mainly due to additional legacy monies received but also the impact of covid which slowed down some of the expenditure.

BBOWT had set itself a minimum target figure for free funds, to retain against a potential downturn in its financial fortunes, equivalent to 3 months operating costs, but given the fluctuations in cashflow, and potential risks, will be keeping reserves more around the 6 months of operating costs which will be reassessed on an annual basis.

GT talked about membership which had continued to grow, up by 1000 during this financial year, and 3K over the last two years. This was partly driven by the increased investment in face to face recruitment post lockdown.

The Strategic Development fund allows BBOWT to invest in projects that support its new strategy, and this was topped up during the March 2022 financial year. This will ringfence strategic funds and allow BBOWT to deliver on long term projects.

GT summarised that BBOWT had a very positive year financially which gives some risk protection and a solid foundation to deliver on the new strategy. 10% inflation is unwelcome news for everyone and will have a tough impact on BBOWT over the next few years, together with political and other challenges which lie ahead will result in a significant increase in costs. The cost of living crisis is impacting on donations and affordability for a lot of members and other income streams, such as trusts and grants, are super competitive. As such income is expected to be broadly flat for the next few years. Ash Dieback continues to be a significant problem, with further work to mitigate risks planned for the winter.

There was an opportunity for members to put questions to the panel, via the Q&A function, but none were received.

Approval of Accounts:

Proxy votes for the financial report for the financial year ending 31 March 2022 were as follows:
31 proxies provided, 30 FOR, 0 AGAINST, 1 ABSTAINING APPROVAL

The financial report for the financial year ending 31 March 2022 was APPROVED.

Proposed: George Levvy *Seconded: Graeme Thompson*

6. The Appointment of Auditors

GT reported that BBOWT had conducted a review of haysmacintyre's performance during the year, which continues to remain positive. As part of good industry practice haysmacintyre are proposing to rotate their audit partner, to a new partner with very relevant environmental charity experience, over the next year which provides additional comfort on ensuring that they retain their independence and ensures a fresh pair of eyes on the audit. On the basis of their continued good performance and depth of charity experience we recommend their reappointment as auditors for another 12 months.

Proxy votes for the re-appointment of haysmacintyre as the Trust's auditors were as follows: 31 proxies provided, 31 FOR, 0 AGAINST, 0 ABSTAINING APPROVAL

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

Proposed: George Levvy *Seconded: Graeme Thompson*

7. Election of Trustees

GL reported that the Nominations Committee had met to organise and lead the process of recruiting new Trustees to the Board. Following a skills audit of the Board, the Trust had advertised for applicants with expertise in the following areas: financial, legal, digital, EDI, campaigning, advocacy; farming or local government. They were also keen to receive applications from people with an ethnic minority background. Although there was an unprecedented number of applications none were from ethnic minority candidates.

After a process of application and interview, the Nominations Committee had recommended Mark Chacksfield, Tim Davies, and Zoe Hancock to the Board. During the AGM, a short interview was held with each of the new trustees, around their passions for wildlife and what they hoped to be able to bring to the Board of BBOWT Trustees.

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

Proxy votes for the election of Mark Chacksfield, Tim Davies and Zoe Hancock as Trustee's were as follows: 93 (31 for each Trustee) proxies provided, 90 FOR, 0 AGAINST, 3 ABSTAINING APPROVAL

The membership APPROVED the election of Mark Chacksfield, Tim Davies and Zoe Hancock which were *proposed by George Levvy* and *seconded by Graeme Thompson*.

GL reported that four Trustees had retired from the Board since the last AGM: Jane Cotton, Mike Pollard, Ian Davidson, and Chris Mees. GL thanked them all the for their service to the Trust. Extra thanks were given to Jane Cotton and Ian Davidson who had extended their terms, beyond the usual two terms, to assist with the transition of the new chair which had last year occurred outside the usual cycle.



8. Re-appointment of President and Honorary Vice Presidents

This year the President, Steve Backshall, and two Honorary Vice Presidents, Dr Pam Berry and Martin Spray, were coming to the end of their term. All had expressed their wish to stand to be re-appointed. The Board fully endorsed each candidate.

It was proposed the appointment of Steve Backshall as President for re-election.

Proxy votes for the re-appointment of Steve Backshall as President was 31 proxies provided, 31 FOR, 0 AGAINST, 0 ABSTAINING APPROVAL.

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

Proxy votes for the re-appointment of Dr Pam Berry and Martin Spray as Honorary Vice Presidents were as follows: 62 (31 for each Trustee) proxies provided, 62 FOR, 0 AGAINST, 0 ABSTAINING APPROVAL

The membership APPROVED the re-appointment of Steve Backshall, Dr Pam Berry, and Martin Spray, which were *proposed by George Levvy and seconded by Graeme Thompson.*

9. 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. The following questions had been received:

Question	Response
1. With only a single car park giving access to Bowdown Woods what is being done to open the other two and who is taking responsibility to clear up the large amounts of litter in the carpark and surrounding area that is created? Who is clearing all the plastic and litter from the woods themselves?	There are 2 car parks open at Bowdown – the main Bomb Site car park and Baines car park – both are listed in the member handbook. At Baines car park the gate is kept shut but not locked, and there is a sign saying that the car park is open for visitors to use. We had to shut the third car park due to ongoing antisocial behaviour. You can also park at Greenham Common control tower car park and walk over to Bowdown Woods. In regard to litter, the Probation service visit the area every 6-8 weeks and do a deeper clean. We have occasional volunteer & staff litter picks of the car park, and the Council clears roadside litter. The car park does unfortunately suffer from antisocial behaviour causing increased rubbish. The police are aware of this and do patrol the site. In regard to litter in the woods staff and volunteers do ad hoc litter picks as and when required.
2. Are there any projects monitoring effects of climate warming on rarer species of flora and fauna (e.g. bittern, nightjar) on our reserves? How may volunteers help?	Since 2002 the Trust has been carrying out formal, strategic monitoring across our suite of nature reserves. This includes habitat condition monitoring and species population surveys. The data helps to inform reserve management, so that we adapt what is not working and maintain what is successful. Factors affecting wildlife gains are many and varied and can include practical constraints (such as a water supply) or wider environmental issues, such as climate change.



	<p>Much of the data we collect is shared with national recording schemes and datasets, which are used to analyse the impacts of climate on population sizes and distributions. This information is used nationally to lobby government and also to help practitioners to better understand their sites and conservation management requirements.</p> <p>While staff co-ordinate and carry out surveys, we could not manage without our magnificent army of volunteer surveyors who annually collect thousands of records. There are currently approximately 100 survey volunteers.</p>
<p>3. As a farmer I am very concerned about the ever increasing number of Red Kites . They have become a pest and are no doubt adding to the decrease in the numbers of small mammals, voles field mice etc. At grass mowing time this year I counted eighteen in the sky. Don't tell me that they only eat carrion, that is simply not true.</p>	<p>The introduction of red kites within the Chilterns is a great conservation success story. Having been hunted to near extinction by the end of the 19th century there are now thought to be over a thousand breeding pairs and this magnificent species is spreading out from the Chiltern heartlands.</p> <p>While red kites primarily eat carrion and species such as slugs and worms, they will also take live prey. However, they are a natural part of our British habitats and have evolved together with other species such as small mammals over thousands of years. We need to welcome 'top predators' as well as those lower down the food chain. While red kites (together with other predators) will impact on small mammal populations, the best way we can ensure that this is not to the detriment of prey species, is to create bigger, more joined up areas which support a wide range of wildlife across our countryside. For example, having rough grassy margins round fields, with dense hedgerows full of different tree species will benefit small mammals, supporting their populations and help provide a wide range of food sources for top predators such as red kites.</p> <p>We would definitely recommend never feeding kites (as occasionally happens), as this is bad for the kites themselves, can unsustainably raise kite population sizes and causes conflict with people</p>
<p>4. Given recent food insecurity issues following the Ukraine crisis, do you think that BBOWT's aims may conflict with or even be threatened by a need to increase UK food production?</p>	<p>There is a question around whether the UK will ever be self-sufficient in producing food, especially given our varied diet, not all of the food we consume can be grown in the UK. We need to think carefully about the food we do produce in regard to food security and the nature and climate crisis. A future sustainable farming industry may mean growing less meat but more fruit and vegetables, more of a plant based diet. Too much food is currently grown to feed to animals taking grains away from making food products for human consumption.</p> <p>The BBOWT Board recently visited FarmED looking at regenerative farming. There is food insecurity, and we can do what we can in switching diets but there is no reason why we should forgo nature for producing food.</p>

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	This is something BBOWT will be keeping a close eye on in the future. The NFU is also talking about food production, and we need to ensure that this growth is sustainable. We will need to put pressure on the government re the new ELM scheme, about farming with nature and other goods and services that don't undermine the production of foods.
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Additional questions were submitted during the Q&A function, and these will be responded to outside of the AGM. Questions can also be submitted at any time via info@bbowt.org.uk

The AGM closed at 11.03am