

CESHIRE WILDLIFE TRUST
46th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
HELD AT BURTON MANOR, WIRRAL
ON THURSDAY 22 OCTOBER 2009, AT 7.00 PM

Present: Sir Richard Baker-Wilbraham (President)
Professor David Norman (Chairman)
10 Trustees
16 Staff
36 Trust Members (names recorded)
Paul Booth (Mitchell Charlesworth Auditors)

Apologies for absence:

Apologies for absence were received from Mr Chris Koral (Trustee), Mr Stuart Harvey (Trustee) plus 37 members (names recorded).

1. WELCOME BY THE PRESIDENT, SIR RICHARD BAKER-WILBRAHAM

Sir Richard welcomed all present and thanked everyone for coming. He commented that it was appropriate to be meeting in Wirral as Wirral Countryside Volunteers have recently been awarded a prestigious Unilever Dragonfly Award. Furthermore, several of this year's winners of the Eric Thurston awards are based in Wirral. Sir Richard went on to thank Janel and all the staff and volunteers at CWT for all the hard work over the past twelve months and remarked how much he was looking forward to the presentation later in the evening on the highlights of the past year and the plans for the future. He also thanked David Norman as Chairman and all the Trustees for all the time and expertise they devote to the governance of the Trust and remarked that it is reassuring to know that CWT is in safe hands during these difficult financial times.

2. INTRODUCTION BY THE CHAIRMAN, PROFESSOR DAVID NORMAN

The Chairman thanked Sir Richard and added his welcome to those present.

Before moving on with the meeting, the Chairman requested that any Members wishing to raise items under `Any Other Business` should indicate what those items might be. No matters were raised at this point but the Chairman added that there would be a further opportunity to raise issues under `Any Other Business` when that part of the Agenda is reached.

3. MINUTES OF THE 45th AGM (15 October 2008)

The Chairman asked for a proposer and seconder that the Minutes issued were a correct record of the proceedings:

Proposed: Stephen Ross
Seconded: Julia Hancell

The proposal was carried unanimously by the vote and the minutes were signed by the Chairman on behalf of the members.

4. REPORT AND ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2009

The Chairman handed over to Peter Young, Chairman of the Finance Committee, to present the accounts for the 12 month period ended 31 March 2009. Peter Young indicated that he would be happy to take questions at the end of his report.

Peter reported that although the Trust has had a couple of difficult years, as he said at last years AGM, the Trustees were confident that the changes that had been made had put the Trust in a much stronger position. He was happy to report that, despite the very difficult economic background during the past year, this is indeed the case.

During the year to end March 2009 the Trust made a profit of £26,607, and the figures for the previous 15 months have been amended to show a profit of £63,507 which is an improvement of about £69K. This is almost entirely due to a different treatment of the value of the Trust's herd of cattle and flock of sheep. Our previous auditors had advised us that these should be treated as assets and depreciated, with no allowance made for the value of their progeny until they were sold. The more sensible approach now taken has been to regard these as stock, valued at market value.

The other major changes this year have been the absence of any major legacies, and the substantial reduction in the profit made by CES, the Trust's wholly owned ecological consultancy company, from over £100K in the previous 15 months to £21K this year. This was largely due to a sharp fall in the market caused by the major reduction in development work requiring ecological surveys and mitigation work. This situation has worsened somewhat this year, but the notorious green shoots of recovery may now be starting to show.

While the Trust has been successful in obtaining significant grants both during the year to end March, and since then, which enables the Trust to carry out substantial work towards achieving our objectives; the core funding for the Trust's core objectives comes from our members and their subscriptions. It is therefore vital that we continue to build this core funding. Despite the difficult conditions, our membership subscriptions continued at the same level in the 12 months to end March as during the previous 15 months, and the focussed efforts of Janel and the membership team over the past year have resulted in an increase in these levels over recent months which augurs well for the future.

The Trust has not made any substantial progress towards meeting our target for financial reserves equivalent to four months of expenditure other than the significant value of our animals, but our progress in increasing the core funding from membership subscriptions, and in obtaining major grants, shows that we are moving in the right direction.

Peter paid tribute to Lorna Harrison, CWT Finance Manager, who joined us a year ago, for her work in getting the financial affairs of the Trust fully under control. While Jackson Stephen's outsourcing team helped in our transition period, we are certain that the change to having our own excellent Finance Manager has been very positive. He noted that as members will be aware, the Trust changed auditors during the year from Jackson Stephen to Mitchell Charlesworth, and we are asking for members' approval of their appointment for the current year.

Peter then indicated that he was happy to answer any questions on these accounts. The attendees raised no questions. The Chairman thanked Peter for his sterling work both as Chairman of the Finance Committee and non executive director of CES and for all the time he has given voluntarily in these roles.

The Chairman asked for those Members present to approve the accounts:

Proposed: Philip Cheek
Seconded: Jean Dufty

The proposal was carried unanimously by the vote.

The Chairman confirmed that the proxy votes received were in favour of approval of the accounts as presented to the 2009 AGM (**24 votes for and 0 votes against**).

Before the next agenda item could be discussed, one of the members, Mr Don Begg of Nantwich, raised several questions regarding the election of Council members and the procedure for adding items to the agenda of an AGM. The Chairman responded that the Trust is run by a Council of Trustees who are nominated and elected at an AGM. At last year's AGM, seven new Trustees were elected after they had

responded to an article in the Grebe. It was clarified that the Council set the agenda for the AGM and that members can raise any additional items under the AOB section of the agenda.

5. ELECTION OF COUNCIL MEMBERS

It was explained that under article 33, one fifth of Council must retire each year but may stand for re-election. There are currently 13 Trustees so three members of Council have retired under Article 33 and are standing for re-election (Peter Young, Julia Hancell, Stephen Ross).

Profiles of each of them have appeared in The Grebe, on the website and copies of all three profiles were available on members' seats.

The Chairman asked for a proposer and seconder that:

- i. Mr Peter Young, Council member retiring under Article 33, be elected as a Council Member.
Proposed: Ian Mills
Seconded: Damian Waters

The proposal was carried by the majority with one vote against.

- ii. Mr Stephen Ross, Council member retiring under Article 33, be elected as a Council Member.
Proposed: Neil Friswell
Seconded: Ed Samuels

The proposal was carried by the majority with one vote against.

- iii. Mrs Julia Hancell, Council member retiring under Article 33, be elected as a Council Member.
Proposed: Paul Oldfield
Seconded: Hilary Ash

The proposal was carried by the majority with one vote against.

The results of the proxy vote, for the record were as follows:

	In favour	Against
Peter Young	24	0
Stephen Ross	24	0
Julia Hancell	24	0

The Chairman expressed his pleasure at welcoming back his fellow Trustees to continue their service.

6. ELECTION AND REMUNERATION OF AUDITORS

Peter Young explained that after a competitive tender process, led by Frank Kerkham, a Trustee with professional experience as an auditor, the Trust has selected Mitchell Charlesworth as their new auditors. Peter asked that the members officially appoint Mitchell Charlesworth as the Trust's Auditors, with their remuneration to be decided upon by Council.

Proposed: Frank Kerkham
Seconded: Philip Cheek

The proposal was carried by the majority with one vote against.

The Chairman confirmed that the proxy votes received were in favour of the appointment of Mitchell Charlesworth as the Trust Auditors, with their remuneration to be decided upon by Council. (23 votes for and 0 votes against).

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

No additional items were notified before the meeting.

Mr D Begg requested that an item be added to the agenda of next years AGM to allow discussion of a procedure for members to add items to the agenda of an AGM.

This completed the formal business of the meeting and the Chairman formally closed the meeting at this point.

PRESENTATION OF ERIC THURSTON AWARDS

The Chairman indicated that it was now his pleasure to engage in one of the most enjoyable parts of the evening and present the Eric Thurston Awards to those Members of the Trust who had been nominated by their peers to be presented with this acknowledgement of their outstanding contribution to wildlife in the region.

The first award to be presented this evening was given to **John Somerville**. John has been the manager of Brookheyes Covert SSSI for over thirty years. He is a member of a very active North Group reserve management team that descend on all the North Group Reserves to carry out whatever work is necessary. John is an ardent birder spending a lot of time around the lanes that crisscross Carrington Moss. More recently he has become involved in flora surveys and spends considerable amounts of time recording his sightings which he passes onto the local record centre.

John accepted the award on behalf of all North Group and all those volunteers who have worked with him on CWT reserves. He recalled a time almost 40 years ago when the North Group had only two reserves that were looked after by a group of people in their 20s. Now there are considerably more reserves in the North Group area and those original volunteers are quite a bit older!

The next award was presented to **Paul Loughnane**. Paul is secretary of Wirral Countryside Volunteers and organises their work programme, managing wild areas on Wirral for the benefit of wildlife and people. He has been volunteering with them for at least 19 years. Paul is himself highly skilled in countryside management tasks. He is always keen to pass on these skills to others and organises training days in such skills as hedging and scything, as well as training people informally. The Volunteers were recently awarded the Dragonfly Award by Mersey Basin Campaign for their work.

Paul is also secretary of New Ferry Butterfly Park, CWT's community nature reserve on the former Bebington Station railway goods yard. Since the Park was created in 1993 he has organised and managed all the practical work and taken a large role in obtaining grants to fund it. He also records butterflies on the Park, writes press releases and newsletter articles, sits on Wirral Wildlife committee and generally puts in hours of voluntary work to benefit wildlife in Wirral. All this on top of a full-time job at Liverpool University!

Paul graciously accepted his award and gave special thanks to Hilary Ash, Howard Gibson and the rest of Wirral Group plus all the Wirral Countryside Volunteers. He also expressed his hope that more young people will get involved in volunteering in Wirral in the next few years so that these groups can continue.

The next award was presented to **Ruth Dann**. Ruth has been fund-raising for the Wirral Local Group for at least 25 years. She co-ordinates a small team of volunteers who staff the stalls at charity fairs, talks and events, heaving the boxes of sales goods in and out of venues. Ruth and her team have been very keen to keep Wirral's sales of wildlife-related merchandise going. When CWT ceased central ordering, Ruth with the help of Barbara Greenwood (a former Eric Thurston Award winner) took on sourcing and ordering suitable goods with all the work in stock control that follows. Ruth's work has raised thousands of pounds for the Trust over the last 25 years - currently about £2000 a year. The stall's presence at events also acts as publicity for the Wildlife Trust.

Ruth thanked the Chairman and Sir Richard, adding that she was honoured to receive this beautiful and inspiring award and felt a bit humble when she thought about her own efforts compared to some of the previous winners. She remarked that she had enjoyed working for the Trust and would not have been able to do as much without Barbra Greenwood and the Wirral fundraising committee. Ruth added that she had seen many changes since she first became a member of CWT and the Trust today is one that she was

very happy and proud to be part of, with great staff, great volunteers and a great headquarters in surroundings with great potential.

The next award was presented to **Mike Maher**, Reserves Manager at Cleaver Heath. In the past six years the hard work and enthusiasm of Mike and a small group of volunteers have turned a good heathland site in to a 'best example' site commended by Defra. Mike is also an active member of Wirral Barn Owl Group and recorded a number of tetrads for the Cheshire and Wirral Bird Atlas. He assists at events and activities and also conducts joint events with Wirral Ranger staff such as Dawn Chorus and Lowland Heath walks.

Mike remarked that everything he has done was as part of a team and he was honoured to accept the award on behalf of all the other volunteers that have helped him with his work and the committee of Wirral Group.

Finally, the Chairman was delighted to make an award to **Linda Higginbottom**. Linda has been involved with the Wirral Group for a long time and is currently their publicity officer. She started up Wirral WATCH club ten years ago with Matt Thomas, a Ranger at Thurstaston Country Park, and will be doing her final WATCH club in December this year. In addition to her leadership of WATCH in Wirral, Linda has been a long term active supporter of many Trust events and activities including Apple days and makes a valued and positive contribution to the committee of Wirral Wildlife. She has taken on the management and development of the Wirral Wildlife website and blog which reaches many people, some far from Wirral. Her engagement with local media has resulted in greatly increased attendance at events and much wider publicity for CWT and the Wirral Group.

Linda thanked Council for the award and remarked that it was difficult to accept recognition for something that had been so much fun and went on to say how much she had enjoyed the pond dipping, crafts and getting muddy involved with being a WATCH leader. She also felt that she was only the tip of a very large iceberg of people who deserved thanks for their support of the WATCH group in Wirral, including the rangers, Margaret Jackson and Sue Unwin, to name but a few. Her greatest reward will be if the children reached through WATCH go on to keep their love of and interest in wildlife.

After completing the awards the Chairman observed that the Trust has always been a membership organisation and that, in addition to the efforts made by the staff, thousands of hours of volunteer work go into delivering the conservation work needed to produce a Cheshire Region Richer in Wildlife. The members present gave a round of applause for all the volunteers who give their time to support the Trust. The Trust has come a long way since its beginnings in a porta-cabin at Marbury Country Park and it now has a good base at Bickley Hall Farm and a larger but still hard working and dedicated staff. He went on to formally thank the staff for their efforts over the past year and this was followed by a round of applause from the members.

HIGHLIGHTS OF 2007-08 PRESENTATION (By Janel Fone, Chief Executive & Charlotte Harris, Director of Conservation)

Janel Fone and Charlotte Harris gave a presentation entitled 'A Cheshire region richer in wildlife by 2020 – Highlights and Looking Forward' (A print out of this presentation is available as Appendix 2)

The Chairman thanked Janel Fone and Charlotte Harris for an enjoyable and informative presentation.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and also thanked the President, Sir Richard Baker-Wilbraham, for his steadfast support and behind-the-scenes involvement. Sir Richard also thanked all those present and concluded that it had been an exceptionally positive and interesting meeting with a marvellous presentation at the end. The meeting ended at 9.30pm.