

MINUTES OF THE 40TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Held on Saturday 15th October 2022, at 11:00 o'clock at
Brownhills Community Centre, Chester Road North, Brownhills, Walsall, WS8 7JS and via Zoom

Present:

David Green (DGr) Vice Chair (Chair)
James Larner (JLa), Treasurer
Eamon Mooney (EM), Secretary
Lynn Besenyei (LBe), Trustee
Anna Bright (ABr), Trustee
Members also present please see separate list

In attendance:

Delia Garratt (DGa), CEO, Ex-Officio
Jane Dominese (JDo), Governance & Administration Officer (Note taker)
Also in attendance please see separate list

Apologies:

Lisa Pinney (LPi), Chair of Trustees
Phil Beardmore (PBe), Trustee
Denise McLellan (DMc), Trustee
Andy Wayro (AWa), Trustee

Absent:

None

1. WELCOME, APOLOGIES AND INTRODUCTIONS

- 1.1 DGr opened the meeting at 11:01, introduced himself, outlined his role on the Council, the meeting arrangements and explained that he would be Chairing the meeting in LPi's absence.
JDo confirmed there was a quorum to proceed.
- 1.2 The Chair introduced the Secretary, Treasurer, CEO and two other Trustees in the audience.
Two of the nominated Trustees were also in the audience and would be introduced later in the meeting.
- 1.3 Apologies had been received from LPi, PBe, DMc and AWa and were accepted. Apologies had also been received from two nominated Trustees who were unable to attend due to prior commitments.

2. MINUTES OF THE 39TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (15TH JANUARY 2022)

- 2.1 The Chair asked those Members present if there were any factual corrections of the minutes; there were none. The minutes were accepted as an accurate record.

3. MATTERS ARISING

- 3.1 There were no matters arising from the minutes.

4. CHAIR'S REPORT TO MARCH 2022

- 4.1 DGr shared that it was a critical time for all those committed to seeing nature recover and a world where human beings and nature could thrive together.

The combination of the political instability and the climate crisis meant it would be increasingly important and demanding for it to do so and the Trust would not be able to rise to the challenge without the appropriate resources; this would be illustrated in further detail by the Treasurer in his report.

With this in mind, Trustees felt that it was vital that the Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust represent every part of the community that it served.

- 4.2 The Trust had to overcome huge challenges over the coming years in order to meet its ambitious strategy which the CEO would be outlining later in the meeting. The strategy would require input from the Members, Trustees, supporters, volunteers and staff and for all to be working together over the coming years.

- 4.3 Despite the difficult circumstances over the last year, there was a lot to celebrate and the Council recognised the many obstacles that had already been overcome, such as volunteering, with groups back to working at the various sites and making a difference to their communities.

The increase in numbers of staff employed by the Trust which, in turn, gave increased capacity to complete projects, such as the work completed on the Rivers Stour and Cole, that were particularly important to the eco-system and the opening of EcoPark and its impact on the local community were also celebrated.

- 4.4 DGr concluded with a thanks to the Members, from Staff and Trustees, because it was the Members that underpinned the work of the Trust, none of which could be done without them, and recognised that it had been a challenging time for all.

- 4.5 Trustees also wished to thank the staff, who had continued to work during difficult times, so as to make a difference to nature.

- 4.6 DGr invited questions and, there being none, JLa was invited to present the Treasurer's report.

5. TREASURER'S REPORT, ANNUAL ACCOUNTS AND AUDITORS REPORT

- 5.1 JLa shared that, whilst it had been a difficult year in terms of practicalities, financially, the Trust had delivered a surplus and had been able to make some investments that were linked to the new strategy.

- 5.2 Memberships had increased from 16% to 18% of Income. Unrestricted income had increased to just under 60% from the last financial year, with a long-term target of 70%, thus delivering long-term financial support for the charity's aims and strategic objectives.

- 5.3 An increase in staffing and upskilling current staff to support the longer-term strategy had also taken place.

- 5.4 The Trust had also invested in infrastructure, such as a new finance system, which aided the Officers in the understanding of the organisation's financial position.

- 5.5 A Surplus for the year of £444K, of which £353K was unrestricted had been created. It was anticipated a further surplus would be created in the current financial year.

- 5.6 A substantial amount of funds had been deployed into the creation of EcoPark and it was now a significant addition to fixed assets.

A desktop review of heritage assets had taken place and Trustees were happy that they had been recorded in the books accurately.

- 5.7 The Cash position was very healthy and investments that would support the charity were being considered.
- 5.8 The overdraft facility had been dispensed with.
- 5.9 The Finance and Risk Committee had reviewed the accounts and the external auditors had given a clean audit with no comments and no management observations or recommendations.
- 5.10 Questions were invited and there being none, JLa proposed that The Report and Accounts for the year to 31st March 2021, together with the Auditors' Report, thereon be received and adopted.

Members were also asked to officially re-appoint Auditors Luckmans Duckett Parker Limited for a further year and for their remuneration to be decided upon by the Council.

By show of hands, the Members **UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED** the adoption of the Report and Accounts and the re-appointment of the Auditors.

6. CHANGES TO TRUST COUNCIL

- 6.1 The Secretary outlined the election process and explained that the Articles of Association stipulated that the Trustee Officers were to be appointed on a yearly basis. The Council had endorsed the re-appointment of the current Officers and proposed them to the Members for re-election. They were:

Chair:	Lisa Pinney MBE	Treasurer:	James Larner
Vice Chair:	David Green	Secretary:	Eamon Mooney

By show of hands, the Members **UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED** the re-election of the nominated Trustee Officers.

- 6.2 There were some sections in the Articles of Association that would benefit from re-wording to ensure clarity and ease of operations and it was intended that the Articles be reviewed and brought to the next AGM for ratification.
- 6.3 EMO emphasised the Trust's commitment to diversity and inclusion and the Council's wish to be more representative of the communities it served and, in particular, to draw younger people into the governance of the Trust.

Following a rigorous recruitment programme, Trustees had nominated 6 people for election to the Trust Council. All candidates had expressed a passion for the Trust's work and had skill sets that would add value to the Council of Trustees and help the Executive as needed.

Unfortunately, one of the candidates had withdrawn from the process due to time commitments.

Members received a short summary of the skills and experience that the nominated Trustees would bring to The Council. It was proposed the appointment for a term of three years of the following five new Trustees be ratified:

- | | | | | | |
|----|--------------|----|----------------------|----|------------|
| 1. | Jack Daniel | 2. | Alex Nicholson-Evans | 3. | Sabra Khan |
| 4. | Joseph Moran | 5. | Waheed Saleem | | |

6.3 By show of hands, the Members **UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED** the appointments and the proposed Trustee appointments were **RATIFIED**.

7. LOOKING AHEAD – PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

7.1 DGa reflected on the anger felt by environmental charities and NGOs following the recent Government announcements and the mini-budget. In particular:

1. The removal of 570 laws derived from EU directives covering water, clean air and habitat.
2. The creation of a low tax investment zones where environment protections would be released and developments encouraged.
3. The scrapping of the post-Brexit environmental land management scheme that paid farmers to enhance nature.

She encouraged members to contact MPs so that they could understand the general public's feelings.

7.2 DGa added that a Business Plan, that underpinned the Strategy launched in June 2022 and would support its delivery, was being developed and would take into account the political context.

7.3 DGa shared the Trust's priorities to the year 2030:

1. Nature is in recovery, with abundant, diverse wildlife across Birmingham and the Black Country.
2. People are taking action for nature and the climate across Birmingham and the Black Country.
3. Nature is playing a central and valued role in helping to address local and global problems

She went on to acknowledge that the Trust would not be able to achieve its target for Nature's recovery without the help of partners, supporters and funders as well as the political will of local government and the local community taking action for nature.

The Trust was delighted to be working with its first youth ambassador and now its first young Trustee and had also recently appointed a Youth Action for Nature Manager that would help take the Trust's work forward.

7.4 The Trust was developing its own sustainability plan to reduce its carbon footprint and make the Trust sustainable over the coming years.

7.5 No questions had been submitted in advance of the meeting and questions were invited from those present.

7.5.1 A Member raised the following question:

"Historically, the Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust had been perceived to be a Birmingham focussed organisation and less active in the Black Country. What was the Trust now doing to be more active in the wider conurbation?"

In response, Members were advised that two significant projects were underway: The Love your River Stour project and a project in the Walsall heathlands.

In addition, in the Business Plan, a hub and spoke approach was being developed in order to ensure that there were key areas in the Black Country that the Trust committed to work in. These included Stourbridge, Dudley and Walsall in the first instance but other areas across the region would also be included.

7.5.2 A further question was raised by a Member:

"How were the Trust working with Birmingham Council on nature recovery and creating more open spaces? In particular, Hay Meadows and similar types of grass land, not just parks, but also grass verges?"

They were advised that there was regular and positive dialogue with Birmingham City Council who had been inspired by the Trust's plans and strategy and were using them to influence their own land management. A lot of work had been completed alongside the Council on enhancing open spaces around Lay Hill Park and Manor Farm.

7.5.3 A new Member shared that he was working on a climate communications campaign, trying to engage the media, with information on climate action from a wide range of people.

He was hoping to have conversations with members in the room.

7.5.4 A member on line made 2 comments:

1. *"Six or so years ago the Trust was in danger of bankruptcy and I was involved in emergency action to prevent that, so many congratulations to all involved in bringing the Trust to its strong position today."*
2. *"Regarding the current Government policies, I have been writing about this and have deliberately not mentioned the figure of 570 regulations being scrapped. Without more context I think doing so makes the deregulators' case for them. I was really surprised at this number. Best to stick to the generality and impacts I suggest."*

7.5.4.1 The Member was thanked for their comments and they **WERE NOTED**.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

8.1 DGr thanked everyone for attending and shared that the date of the next AGM would be advertised in the Trust Magazine in due course.

8.2 There being no other business the meeting closed at 11:49.

Minutes approved by:

SIGNATURE

PRINT NAME

DATE

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Held on Saturday 15th October 2022, at 11:00 o'clock at
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Also Present

1. Sabra Khan (Nominated Trustee)
2. Joe Moran (Nominated Trustee)
3. Waheed Saleem (Nominated Trustee)
4. Ms Rachel Pethick
5. Kieran Bramwell
6. Mr Martin Smith
7. Mrs Smith
8. Helen Boyd
9. Andrew Donovan
10. Maureen Gough
11. Mrs Patricia Mullany
12. Miss Michelle Perry
13. Miss Claire Perry
14. Mr Peter Beck
15. Vina Campbell
16. Mr Michael Thompson
17. Joshua Neicho
18. Peter Shirley (via Zoom)

Proxy Votes

1. M Spencer
2. Jeffrey Hughes
3. Nina Griffiths
4. Christine Lockley
5. Lisa Pinney
6. Phil Beardmore
7. Lilian Holmes
8. Nicola Fleet-Milne
9. Maureen Yule
10. Sarah Khan
11. D Lau
12. Dorothy Green
13. Laraine Preece
14. Denise McLellan
15. Yvonne & Peter Moore
16. Lynda Gibbon
17. Jill Collins

Also in Attendance

1. Anna Cunningham
2. Hubert G

Staff in Attendance

1. Simon Atkinson (SA)
2. Ian Holmes (IHo) (via Zoom)
3. Gareth Morgan (GMo)
4. Emma Thompson (ET)