

CHESHIRE WILDLIFE TRUST
62nd Annual General Meeting
Ness Botanic Gardens
Saturday 8th November 2025, at 10.30am

Present: Felicity Goodey (President)
Bill Stothart (Chair)
Jamie Richards (Treasurer)
Charlotte Harris (CEO)

7 staff members

99 members attended including 6 Trustees (representing 69 memberships*)

*1 vote per membership so the maximum number of votes available on the day was 69

WELCOME BY CHAIR BILL STOTHART

Bill welcomed all the members to the AGM and gave an overview of the event including confirming that the meeting was quorate. Bill explained that only members were able to vote and there was one vote per membership. He confirmed that 44 proxy votes were received in advance. Voting cards were issued to those eligible upon arrival.

Bill reflected on his time as Chair. He highlighted some of the challenges including covid and some of the successes including the re-introduction of beavers. Bill introduced Charles Neame as successor.

INTRODUCTION BY FELICITY GOODEY, PRESIDENT

Felicity Goodey welcomed all the members present and thanked everyone for coming.

Our President opened the meeting by challenging the idea that conservationists block progress, noting that wildlife concerns affect few planning decisions while England faces severe nature depletion. She argued that short-term political and commercial pressures drive poor infrastructure outcomes and environmental damage. Goodey highlighted successful community-led efforts to protect peatlands and oppose harmful developments like Danes Moss and Adlington New Town and criticised the government for ignoring long-term public interest. She urged members to use their collective influence - Wildlife Trusts already have more members than the three established political parties combined - to advocate for nature recovery, especially as regional powers grow. Goodey called for expanding membership to strengthen campaigns that protect habitats and ensure sustainable futures.

Felicity officially opened the AGM at 10.45am.

1. MEMBERS PRESENT AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies were received from members for absence.

Voting slips were received in advance from 44 members.

2. MINUTES OF THE 61st AGM (9th November 2024)

The President asked those members present if there were any factual corrections to the minutes of the 61st AGM; there were none.

She then proposed that the minutes made available in advance on the CWT website were a correct record of the proceedings.

Proposer: Charles Neame

Seconded: Stephanie Anderson

Felicity invited members to vote.

112 votes in favour (including 44 by proxy) -

1 abstention

0 votes against

Motion carried and the minutes were adopted as a true and accurate record.

3. REPORT AND ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

Felicity handed over to Jamie Richards, Treasurer and reminded members that the accounts have been available on CWT's website in advance of this meeting. No questions relating to the figures in the accounts were received in advance.

Report by Jamie Richards, Treasurer:

The Treasurer reported that the financial year ending 31st March 2025 was another successful one for the Trust with growth and financial sustainability continuing.

Total income for the year was £4.3m compared with £3.5m in the previous year. This increase was largely due to the receipt of a £600k legacy from the Estate of David Aldred for which we are incredibly grateful, and which is being used in this current year to buy and rewild land in accordance with the David's wishes.

Jamie explained that accounting convention requires that the whole of this legacy is declared in the year that it was received and this is why the overall surplus for the year was £637k. If we adjust for this legacy, then the surplus is a more understandable £37k and this is now the ninth year in a row that the Trust has achieved an overall surplus.

Total cash at the year-end stood at £2.07m which is a significant increase on last year's cash balance - due largely to the receipt of the legacy.

Grants were the Trust's most significant income source accounting for 42% of total income. Grant income has continued to grow since 2021. Earned income continues to be a significant source of revenue at 27%, along with membership subscriptions (in green) at 13%.

Income from grants rose by £194k to £1.8m - a 12% increase from the previous year – funds were secured from a range of sources including National Lottery Heritage Fund, Natural England, Scottish Power and several charitable trusts. Grant funding enabled the continuation and expansion of existing nature recovery and community engagement activities.

Earned income remained steady at £1.16m. Jamie explained that the demand for professional habitat creation and land management advice continues to remain high in Cheshire. Income from membership increased by 2% to £543k. Thanks were given to all members for this ongoing support. Income from donations and legacies increased to £714k. This was largely thanks to the legacy income but donations also continue to be an important source of income.

Over £3.1m was spent directly on our charitable activities relating to nature recovery and community mobilisation. Expenditure on direct salaries increased by 5% from £1.6m to £1.7m due to further investment in staff to service new projects and contracts. Expenditure on support costs increased from £499k to £559k reflecting some one-off repair bills incurred in the year. Support costs represented just over 15% of total expenditure.

84.8p in every £1 was spent directly on delivering our charitable objectives (with the remainder spent on support costs such as office costs, admin support, insurance, utilities etc) and almost all expenditure (99.3%) remained in Cheshire. And for every £1 given through membership, we raise a further £6.94.

Thanks were extended to all funders and supporters.

Jamie handed back to Felicity to deal with any questions of which there were none.

Felicity proposed that the Report and Accounts for the year to 31st March 2025, together with the Auditors' Report thereon be received and adopted.

Proposer: Jamie Richards

Seconder: Sajid Javed

Felicity invited members to vote.

89 votes in favour (inc. 20 by proxy)

0 abstentions

0 votes against

Motion carried and the accounts for the year were adopted.

4. ELECTION AND REMUNERATION OF AUDITORS

Felicity explained that during the year an audit re-tender process was carried out. Several audit firms were interviewed by CWT's Finance and Audit Committee. Jamie Richards explained the process. Three firms (Mitchell Charlesworth, Hains Watts and Saffery LLP) submitted detailed proposals about their approach to the audit, their ways of working and the fee they would charge. They were interviewed and assessed against scoring criteria.

It was decided that Saffery understood the Trust's needs well, had exceptional sector expertise and could offer a comprehensive range of additional services within the fee. Jamie extended thanks to the outgoing auditors, Mitchell Charlesworth (Audit) Ltd, especially their Senior Statutory Auditor, Jamielee Johnston for their valuable support over the years.

Felicity proposed that members officially appoint Saffery LLP as the Trust's Auditors, with their remuneration to be decided upon by Council.

Proposer: Jamie Richards

Second: Bill Stothart

Felicity invited members to vote.

111 votes in favour (including 43 proxy)

1 abstention

1 vote against (including 1 proxy)

Motion carried and the President confirmed the appointment of Saffery LLP

5. RE-ELECTION OF COUNCIL MEMBERS

Felicity explained that 2 Council members are standing for re-election under the articles of association.

Claire Swarbrick is standing for election to a further term of 3 years under Article 3.5.

The resolutions are as follows:

That Claire Swarbrick be re-elected for a further 3 years under Article 3.5.

Proposer: Sarah Henshall

Second: Rebecca Collins

Felicity invited members to vote.

113 votes in favour (inc 44 by proxy)

0 abstentions

0 votes against

That Jamie Richards be re-elected for a further 2 years under Article 3.5*

Felicity explained that the normal re-election period is three years, however Jamie's re-election was missed last year and so this is now being corrected with a re-election for 2 years to bring the re-election dates back in line overall.

Proposer: Jac Dennington

Second: Megan Argo

Felicity invited members to vote.

113 votes in favour (inc 44 by proxy)

0 abstentions

0 votes against

The proposal was carried by the vote and it was confirmed that Claire Swarbrick is re-elected for a further 3 years and Jamie Richards for a further 2 years.

Members were asked to note that Rebecca Collins and Bill Stothart, Chair, are retiring under Article 3.5. Trustees and staff extended thanks to Rebecca and Bill for their valuable contributions during their time on the Board.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There were no advance questions relating to governance or finances. Several general questions about CWT's work and wildlife were received in advance and these were put to the panel during the post AGM discussion.

Felicity asked if members present have any questions relating to CWT's governance and finances.

There were no further questions from the floor and Felicity encouraged anyone who had a question after the event to contact the Trust by emailing membership@cheshirewt.org.uk

8. Highlights of the Year

CEO, Charlotte Harris, shared some highlights from the year including securing 100 acres of land for nature, creating 42 hectares of woodland, creating and restoring 35 ponds for great-crested newts and creating 65 hectares of species-rich meadows. Through our Wild Network, we've inspired 22,000 actions for nature. Through our work with schools, 2,000 children have visited our nature reserves, and 50 teachers have been trained in outdoor learning. We have engaged with over 17,500 members, 39,000 social media followers and 5,000 people at events.

9. Volunteer of the Year Award

Felicity explained that the Volunteer of the Year Award is **the highest accolade for volunteering** given by Cheshire Wildlife Trust. The award is given in memory and inspired by the contribution of Eric Thurston, a long-standing volunteer for the mid-Cheshire group, who provided inspiration to many others over the years. This year the award was given to Stephen Ross.

Stephen, a life-long supporter of wildlife (with a special interest in birds) and life member of CWT. For over two decades, he has applied his enormous networking and facilitating skills to further the activities of Wirral Wildlife and its environment-related activities in the Wirral. He has been Chair of Wirral Wildlife (the Wirral Group of CWT) since 2004, and hosted Committee meetings in his home from 2012 until early 2020, when meetings moved on-line in response to covid restrictions. He is a great supporter of our outreach activities, always introducing the talks and other activities which form our winter programme, and leading the discussions with which these close. He is a willing volunteer at the various stalls and displays Wirral Wildlife put on at various events and has often used his (very) large vehicle to help with associated transport. His entertaining Annual Report always brings a global perspective to what Wirral Wildlife does.

He represents Wirral Wildlife on many occasions. For example, in July 2025 he chaired a one-day event organised by Jane Turner to 'Celebrate Biodiversity and Sustainability in Hoylake and Meols'. He applies his enormous networking ability to keeping Wirral Wildlife in informal contact with many other organisations in the Wirral including The Heswall Society, Rotary, Heswall Hall Community Trust (we held our winter programme of talks and events at Heswall Hall for many years) and the Dee Estuary Conservation Group (where he was our representative for some time, becoming vice-chair and then chair for a while).

Stephen has also been very active within CWT. Soon after becoming Chair of Wirral Wildlife, he became a member of Council and a Trustee, bringing his expertise from his professional life to the Personnel Subcommittee of CWT and to the preparation of several reports relating to CWT activities.

Stephen was present to receive the award.

10. Formal Closure

Felicity declared the formal business closed at 11.50am.

The AGM was followed by presentations and discussion on the theme of Protecting Nature.

Director of Nature Recovery, Ben Gregory introduced this session and presentations were given by:

- Dr David Parker, Dee Estuary Conservation Group
- Mark O'Sullivan, Hob Hey Wood
- Issy Hatton, Danes Moss Trust

The speakers along with staff from CWT took questions from the audience on a wide range of topics relating to conservation and the protection of nature.

After the event, members enjoyed the remainder of the day at Ness Botanic Gardens.