

MINUTES

Meeting	75th Annual General Meeting
Date	26 October 2024
Time	2pm
Location	Whisby Education Centre

Present

Geoff Trinder (President), Anita Quigley (Chair), Kitty Hamilton (Acting Honorary Treasurer), 44 other members of the Trust, 9 members of staff and 205 members represented by proxy

Item

In advance of the Annual General Meeting, members had received a copy of the AGM Notice, a Proxy Form and the Annual Review for the year ending 31 March 2024.

Minutes of the 74th Annual General Meeting held on Saturday 21 October 2023 were approved.

Apologies were received from Vice Presidents Brian Tear and Tim Sands, Chief Executive Paul Learoyd and member Eddie Gaunt.

1 Report of the Trustees for the year ended 31 March 2024

1.1 A summary of the Trustees' Report for the year ended 31 March 2024 was set out in the Annual Review. The full Annual Report and Financial Statements had been available to members on request and were on the Trust's website.

1.2 The Chair reported that the main focus of the year was to commemorate 75 years since the founding of the Trust on 2nd December 1948. The first nature reserve (an original agreement to manage 190 acres of land at Gibraltar Point) was signed into being just days after the formation of the Trust and remained a fantastic example of how things had evolved over time. In its early days, management of the site was entirely volunteer led, including the creation of one of the UK's first bird observatories. The reserve had grown to over 1,000 acres and was still supported by volunteers. The site remained the last breeding site for little terns and the stronghold for ringed plovers in the county. More recently it had been included in plans to make the east coast migration flyway a UNESCO World Heritage Site. This was a fantastic achievement and one that had been replicated in one form or another across much of the reserve network.

1.3 A highlight of the year was a visit by King Charles to the Saltfleetby Theddlethorpe National Nature Reserve in July. He met staff from the Trust and Natural England and learnt about the management of the reserve and efforts to conserve the small, but growing, colony of natterjack toads on the site. Footage from his visit was also included in a BBC documentary broadcast on Boxing Day, bringing the reserve to national attention.

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- 1.4 Shortly after the King's visit, it was announced that Saltfleetby Theddlethorpe would form part of the first in a new 'King's Series of National Nature Reserves'. The Lincolnshire Coronation Coast NNR was officially declared in September and covers 33 square kilometres of sand dunes, salt marshes, mudflats and freshwater marshes, of international importance. Including Donna Nook it was now the 9th largest National Nature Reserve in England.
- 1.5 The National Lottery Heritage Fund supported Nextdoor Nature project was bringing communities together to rewild their neighbourhoods. Since it launched in 2022, local groups had been supported to create and manage wildlife rich community spaces and wilder neighbourhoods, building community spirit for people and providing more habitats for wildlife. The focus areas during the period were Boston, Cleethorpes, Gainsborough, Grimsby, Mablethorpe, Skegness and South Holland. The project was giving people the skills, tools and opportunity to take action for nature and was working with a wide range of organisations and communities that may not have engaged with the Trust otherwise.
- 1.6 Working in partnership with others, the Trust continued to work to restore natural ecosystems at scale and demonstrated what was possible in Lincolnshire. The Trust wanted natural habitats to be able to store and sequester carbon, help prevent flooding, reduce soil erosion, improve soil fertility, provide pollination services, allow nature's recovery at sea and support improvements to people's physical and mental wellbeing.
- 1.7 The Trust had set a target of net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. The Trust's overall total emission had dropped from 103 tCO₂e (2019-20) to 93 tCO₂e. This reduction was significant given that activity undertaken by the Trust had increased by nearly a fifth (based on staff numbers) during this period.
- 1.8 The Chair thanked the staff and volunteers for their immense achievements over the last 12 months.
- 1.9 The Report of the Trustees for the year ended 31 March 2024 was accepted.

2 Audited Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2024

- 2.1 Copies of the audited Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2024 had been available to members on request and were on the Trust's website. An overview of the detail was in the Annual Review.
- 2.2 The Acting Honorary Treasurer said the Trust had finished the year in a healthy financial position. Income rose to £5.2m in 2023-24, up from £3.3m, whilst in the same period total expenditure rose to almost £4.9m, from just over £4.4m in 2022-23. Membership income rose by 7% from £825k to £883k, with the number of members increasing from 26,488 to 27,450, an increase of 3.6%. Legacy income for 2023-24 was below the five year average at £263k, but 2024-25 looked to be an excellent year for legacies with over £1m notified so far.
- 2.3 Total expenditure rose to almost £4.9m, from just over £4.4m in 2022-23. Unrestricted expenditure increased 8% from £2.6m to £2.8m (+8%), whilst restricted expenditure was unchanged at £1.8m, although there were always changes in the mix of the projects and work being undertaken. The £308k exceptional item related to a provision made in respect of the Trust's now closed defined benefit pension scheme.

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2.4	The Acting Honorary Treasurer thanked the finance team for their excellent work throughout the year.
2.5	The audited Financial Statements were accepted.
2.6	A member from Cleethorpes asked what work was being done to increase corporate membership. The Acting Honorary Treasurer said a discussion had taken place at the last Board meeting and this was being taken forward as a working item and was being actively pursued. The Head of Conservation said there was a lot of partnership funding from the likes of Orsted (£3m investment over five years by Orsted), Anglian Water (partnership funded the purchase of Bourne North Fen) and Biffa paid for the bulk of it. She said the Trust secured quite a lot of funding from the private sector.
2.7	A member asked what the Trust meant by inspiring people in one of the graphs in the presentation. The Head of Finance said captured education and public engagement activity.
2.8	The Chair of South Holland Area Group asked if the café at Gibraltar Point made a profit. The Head of Finance said it broke even and the Head of Public Engagement and Communications said it served a broader purpose as it was a great way of engaging with the public.
3	Re-appointment of Wright Vigar Limited as Auditors for 2024-2025
3.1	It was resolved that Wright Vigar Limited be re-appointed as auditors for 2024-25. This followed a tendering process undertaken earlier in the year.
4	Re-election of Trustees (directors)
4.1	Members had been advised in advance of the meeting that three nominations were being recommended by the Board of Trustees for re-election: Cathy Sirett, Mark Smith and Joanne Woolley. All were approved.
5	Anita Quigley
5.1	The Chair confirmed this would be her last AGM as she was standing down, having been Chair for three years and a Trustee for 14 years. Anita Quigley introduced Professor Libby John as her successor; Libby had been appointed as a Trustee the previous year. Anita said it had been a privilege to be the Chair and the Board of Trustees; they had been an amazing team to work with.
5.2	The meeting closed at 2.29pm.