



Yorkshire Wildlife Trust

Annual General Meeting 2021 Draft Minutes

Saturday 16 October 2021 at 9.30am to 4.30pm, Scarborough Spa

The Vice-Chair of the Board of Trustees, Louise Farnell, led the proceedings and chaired the AGM.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Jo Webb, Gurdev Singh and Joanna Royle.

2. Minutes of the AGM 2020 – Louise Farnell

The draft minutes of the Annual General Meeting held virtually on Saturday 21 November 2020 received the approval of the Board on 15 July 2021 and have been available on the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust website since August 2021 and hard copy by request. On their voting forms, members were asked to vote to support the recommendation by the Board of Trustees to approve the draft minutes.

This motion was originally proposed by Christine Packer, Honorary Secretary, and seconded by Paddy Hall. On this matter, our members voted 311 for, 0 against and there were 4 abstentions. This motion is therefore approved.

3. Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2021

Darren Tiffney, Director of Finance and Central Services, provided an overview of the financial performance of YWT during the year to 31 March 2021.

- The Trust has come a long way in the past 5 years, doubling in size in terms of income.
- The total income for the year was approximately £11m (which is a 26% increase on the previous year). Unrestricted Income fell to £4.3m from the previous year of £4.6m (6.5% fall).
- Donations and legacies have reduced by £1m primarily due to one off legacies in the previous year., however we received almost £340k in legacies.
- There has been a large rise from £4.9m to £8.4m in charitable activities.
- Reduction in retail offer due to the pandemic, with a £0.3m drop in income, however this is expected to increase this year.
- Currently we have 44k members generating £1.37m in income.
- £330k was raised in donations
- £110k raised in appeals – wildlife recovery fund and marine appeal.
- The Trust received £310k from the Coronavirus Job Protection Scheme and £30k from local authority support.
- Overall project spending was £7.8m, compared with last year's figure of £7.4m
- Overall support costs are £1.1m
- The Trust has net assets of over £15.9m

Christine Packer thanked Darren for his report. The Annual Report and Accounts gained the approval of the Board at the meeting on 15 July and were made available on our website in August and as hardcopies by request. The motion asking members to approve these documents was originally proposed by Martin Randle, Treasurer, and seconded by Hugh Williamson. On this matter, our members voted 309 for, 0 against and there were 6 abstentions. This motion is therefore approved.

4. Appointment of auditors

Members were asked to vote to support the recommendation to reappoint Saffery Champness as the Trust's auditors for 2021/22.

This motion was originally proposed by Martin Randle, Treasurer, and seconded by Michael Armitage. Members voted 308 for, 3 against and there were 4 abstentions. This motion is approved.

5. Retiring and election of Trustees

Members were asked to vote to support the recommendation by the Nominations Committee of the Board of Trustees for the election of three new Trustees for their first four-year term. Their biographies were made available on our website back in August. They are:

- a) Rebecca Holdsworth. This election was originally proposed by Jo Webb, Chair of the Board of Trustees and seconded by Louise Farnell, Deputy Chair. On this matter, our members voted 308 for, 1 against and there were 6 abstentions.
- b) Nick Perks. This election was originally proposed by Richard Tripp and seconded by Christine Packer, Honorary Secretary. On this matter, our members voted 308 for, 1 against and there were 6 abstentions.
- c) Michael Armitage. This election was originally proposed by Alastair Fitter and seconded by Gurdev Singh. On this matter, our members voted 308 for, 1 against and there were 6 abstentions.

Members were also asked to re-election two existing Trustees for their second four-year term. They are:

- a) Jo Webb. This election was originally proposed by Christine Packer and seconded by Louise Farnell, Deputy Chair and on this matter, our members voted 308 for, 1 against and there were 6 abstentions.
- b) Gurdev Singh. This election was originally proposed by Jo Webb, Chair of the Board of Trustees and seconded by Joanna Royle. On this matter, our members again voted 308 for, 1 against and there were 6 abstentions.

These three appointments and two re-appointments are therefore approved.

6. Updating our Articles of Association

Members were asked to vote to support the recommendation by the Board of Trustees to approve an update to Article 10.1 of our Articles of Association. This entailed the correction of a typing error and enabling an option for our Annual General Meetings to be held virtually in the future. The full text was made available as part of the postal voting forms.

This motion was originally proposed by Gurdev Singh and seconded by Christine Packer. On this matter, our members voted 312 for, 1 against and there were 2 abstentions. This motion is therefore approved.

7. Question and Answer Session

Mr M Whittaker (41200) – ATTENDING

Question: How does YWY develop and maintain relationship with the farming and fishing industries to foster good "working together" practices; and how can this be better promoted in the future?

Respondent: Danny / Martin

Answer: Trust Officers engage with the fishing industry on a number including;

- We have officers sitting on the regional inshore fisheries authorities for Northumberland, North Eastern and Eastern areas, including on scientific advisory groups which propose and support the introduction of sustainable management as part of the North Sea project.
- Our fisheries officer holds a seat on the UK domestic regional fisheries groups, which allocates fishing opportunities (quotas etc) to fishermen on a quarterly basis and can respond to industry needs & requests.
- We are on the steering group for the Seafish Young Seafood Leaders Network supporting new entrants into the fishing industry and development for those early into their careers.
- On a local level we're supporting ERYC to introduce a new seafood destination and marketing strategy promoting the fishing industry through their new Bridlington Bay Strategy. This will work towards a sustainable shellfish fishery, add value to first sale prices and improve the quality and diversify of local seafood produce. Further it is providing micro-business start-up assistance helping retain local jobs rather than have them displaced to other areas. Our fisheries officer is also the chairman of the Holderness Fisheries Local Action Group which has secured and distributed over £6m worth of funding for fishing and seafood related local projects.
- We continue to collaborate and run the Fishermen's Health Trainers project in partnership with the Fishermen's Mission, Seafarers Hospital Society and Humber NHS Trust, providing NHS staff on the quayside offering medical checks and access to NHS services.
- In North Yorkshire, we are bringing forwards a Scarborough Slowfish project as part of Wildeye, which will promote sustainable seafood, local fisheries and offer seafood cookery school training to a wide range of people who otherwise wouldn't have the opportunity including local schools. We are also working with SeaGrown to support their development of a low impact offshore seaweed farm, and continue to pursue other form of sustainable aquaculture including inshore mussel and oyster farming to reduce pressure on wild stocks.

As for farming, YWT works with a variety of farming partners to improve nature on their land, or to help us improve nature on our land. We are also a farming business with our own grazing herd and commercially selling hay from our wildflower meadows. But there is so much more that we could be doing to work with farmers, as a major use of Yorkshire's land. Moving forward we're exploring options to create a network of nature-friendly farmers in Yorkshire, particularly to support others to take advantage of the nature-friendly changes to England's subsidy regimes. Watch this space as there's a large opportunity, that we're keen to realise if we can get the funding, to achieve a lot for nature by working even more with Yorkshire's farming community.

Mr N Mylvaganam & Miss S Mason (51668B & 51668) - ATTENDING

Question: What's the biggest impact an individual can make to combat climate change?

Respondent: Rachael

Answer: The science tells us the biggest impact is to have one less child, not to fly long haul and to reduce our consumption overall, especially of high carbon foods, such as meat and dairy produce. Messages which are hard to hear when we have all lived in a society which sees these things as signs

of success and where some of these things are entwined with the landscapes we love too, particularly here in Yorkshire. Considering the overall carbon footprint of our lifestyles is what is needed, then it is the accumulation of many incremental changes, made by as many people as possible which will help.

In terms of where climate and biodiversity intersect this becomes interesting, as we need to help nature recover and reduce our carbon impacts simultaneously – therefore, actions such as growing our own food, using sustainable transport methods, can have multiple benefits for our health and nature. Nature based solutions have an important role to play at all scales in our gardens, on farms, through our catchments and on our coasts.

YWT is working hard to make these things happen and specifically working on restoring peatlands and marine ecosystems which require technical skills and lots of capital investment. By us also maximising the impact we can have in our particular areas of influence we can make the changes needed.

Mr P Shire (0118799) – ATTENDING

Question: Why living sea centre at Flamborough hasn't reopened and what are YWT plans for it.

Respondent: Martin/Rachael

Answer: Immediately prior to the pandemic our long-term member of staff who had been key to running the LSC departed from the Trust to pursue new opportunities, and at this point we decided we would take the opportunity to review the focus of the work at the LSC prior to recruiting another member of staff to ensure we were making the most impact with the resources invested in the site. When the pandemic hit in 2020, we as many other places closed indoor visitor facilities. While YWT has navigated the pandemic well in many ways, the LSC is one of the areas where we lost capacity and have not yet been able to regain the ground to reopen the site fully. It is being used as a base and to host booked events by our team currently, although not fully open to the public. We are now reviewing the future plans for this facility, particularly talking with the other environmental organisations working at Flamborough Head to consider how we can best serve wildlife and visitors there into the future. We anticipate we will be able to share plans with Members and volunteers who would like to know more in the new year.

Mr M Leonard, Corporate Sponsor from the University of Leeds (54729) – ATTENDING

Question: I know that you undertake some collaborative research work with various universities across Yorkshire, but do you think that there is potential for improving the relationship, by establishing them as local biodiversity hubs for their respective areas?

Respondent: Danny

Answer: We work with a variety of academic partners in many different ways. But we could be doing so much more and we're keen to do so. We'll soon be strengthening our Data & Evidence team, with one of the remits of the new team being to look at how to create a deeper and more impactful relationship with academic partners. Local biodiversity hubs could definitely be part of those conversations!

Ms P Noonan (0091078)

Question: I want to know how you make plans for disabled access to all your sites and how they are maintained?

Respondent: Martin

Answer: Where we are opening up new reserves, or new areas of reserves, we try and ensure there are suitably surfaced paths, as well as accessible facilities. For example, we are currently planning

public access to the new extension at North Cave Wetlands. This includes parking facilities closer to the new space, and a hide that is reached by an appropriately graded ramp. We take advice from campaign groups, as well as from individuals that we work with who have disabilities. It is harder on existing reserves as they were not created with disabled access in mind. But where funding opportunities open up, we will look to refresh routes in ways to improve disabled access and install hides that are more accessible.

Obviously, this is only from the perspective of disabilities that impact on mobility. We do however include sensory areas in some reserve facilities (for example the touch panels at North Cave. Where we intend to improve sites, for example Potteric Carr we will look to work with specific organisations such as in this case, Experience Community which is a NFP CIC that promotes information and access to countryside and 'natural' areas for disabled people. They have worked with Natural Resources Wales, NE and Local Authorities. There are plans for a sensory garden at Potteric Carr and we are looking for funding opportunities to deliver this idea.

We have also benefitted from Peter Lau's expertise in the area of accessibility (he is a WSO). He has done some accessibility audits of our key sites – e.g. Staveley and Ripon City Wetlands in the north. This has directly led to a raft of improvements we have made to make the sites more accessible. Of course we need to be pragmatic as well, as some of our sites are never going to be fully accessible due to the terrain, or fragility of habitats.

We always listen to suggestions and where possible and affordable look to incorporate improvements. However, we recognise we can always do better and would welcome suggestions from members.

Questions from the floor

- **Tree planting – what is the Trust's policy on tree protectors?**

Martin Slater:

Plastic tree protectors are industry standard at the moment, but we want to move away to more sustainable guards and looking at guards that are made out of biodegradable wool. We are also looking at using thorny bushes for a natural protection of saplings.

- **Do you break down demographics and have a policy to get young people or people of colour involved?**

Amanda Spivack:

Yes we do membership profiling and need to diversify the memberships. We are looking at it but it is in early stages and we are working with one of Trustees. We are looking at getting a strong youth presence and taking steps towards it. We recognise that we need to do more but funding is an issue at the moment.

- **Increase in the number of seals at Flamborough Head, have been given 3 different answers as to the reasons for this, please can you confirm the reason.**

James Wood:

The trawl fleet have locally decreased across Yorkshire, this is resulting in expansion in home grounds for seals.

- **Ash dieback – is there much future in the resistance?**

Martin Slater:

There is some optimism that there could be more resistant strains but unknown how long it would take for them to be dominant.

- **What is the current thinking on the Board size and how do you maintain expertise as a Board as the Board gets older?**

Lou Farnell:

There are 15 Trustees, the reason is for historical reasons. Will be losing 6 Board members next year so will still have Board members when this happens.

Expertise – we have terms of office, good practice in governance. Members are to be voted in at AGM and do a term of office at 4 years, then re-elected at AGM then need to step down for another year. This ensures that there is a mix of people and a gap so allow new members. We also annually review skills/experience of those on Board, and when recruiting new Trustees promote any required skills or gaps when advertising.

- **Has the trust any plans to support the re-introduction of beavers in Yorkshire**

Danny Heptinstall:

We will be looking at this in the future. There is currently a trial at Cropton forest to re-introduce beavers and will be a multi-partnership project

Exeter University have expertise in identifying sites that are best for beaver reintroduction, will receive a map towards end of financial year – then build favourable partnerships with land owners.

Additional questions

Mr R Myerscough (65087) – ATTENDING

Question: Does YWT support the concept of UNESCO Global Geoparks?

Respondent: Martin/Danny/Rachael

Answer: UNESCO Geopark Parks must demonstrate a geological heritage of international significance, while also developing and celebrating the links between geological heritage and all other aspects of the area's natural, cultural and intangible heritages. Our Charitable Objectives include "the conservation of... places of... geographical or scientific interest; [and] features of landscape with geological value...". UNESCO Global Geoparks present an excellent opportunity to achieve that charitable objective, so we do indeed support the concept of UNESCO Global Geoparks.

Mrs M Myerscough (65087B) – ATTENDING

Question: Does YWT have an input into Tophill Low Nature Reserve?

Respondent: Martin

Answer: We do not have a direct input into the management of this nature reserve, as it is owned and managed by Yorkshire Water. We do however work with Yorkshire Water and other landowners in the area to try ensure our sites and theirs all contribute to the wider conservation goals for the River Hull and its headwaters.

Miss S Porter (0085236) – ATTENDING

Question: What can be done more to educate the public?

Respondent: Amanda

Answer: Our Gateways Sites and nature reserves provide a variety of different opportunities for people to get involved (and interact) directly with our work, and also give us the opportunity to

inspire visitors to understand more about our wildplaces and interact with wildlife in a responsible and informed way. Our projects, which include the Bradford Urban Discovery Project, Nature Friendly Schools and Seagrass and Oyster community engagement programme are excellent examples of our outreach, where we are proactively working with under-represented communities, young people and business to increase their understanding and knowledge of Yorkshire's wildplaces so they begin to want to care for it, look after it and protect it for future generations. Our experienced engagement and education specialists offer an exciting programme of events each year to appeal to as diverse an audience as possible – some of these are offered free of charge in some local communities where funding allows, others are for members only, others are ticketed events. Our Wildlife Supporter Officers (15) are also located all across Yorkshire and talk to thousands of people each year on our nature reserves, at events and at markets and WI meetings. We use all our communication channels where we can to provide inspiring storytelling and interactive space to better inform members of the public and encourage people to take action for wildlife. We also have good relationships with local and national media and are often asked to provide content which is used to create compelling and insightful news which also helps to educate and inform different audiences, that we might not otherwise reach.

Over the last eighteen months we have also had to think quite differently about how we engage with our audiences – and also provide education to those who are perhaps discovering their local wild patches for the first time. We have increased our digital engagement through the hosting of online talks and also brought together self-led resources into one hub on our website. The digital connections have not only enabled us to reach audiences who may find it tricky to visit our reserves in person, but we have been able to recycle the investment/tools long after the event for other activities and communications. With Living Seas LIVE, Yorkshire Puffin Festival and Migweek collaboration, we have seen continued engagement after the live activity.

There is always more that we can do in this space, which is heavily reliant on securing eternal funding, and as we look to achieve 1 in 4 people taking action for wildlife we are exploring new ways to help our communities become a little bit wilder with the Trust.

The next AGM is Saturday 15 October 2022, venue to be confirmed