

Lavell's Wetland Trust (LWT)

AGM

Charity Number: 1176960

Zoom meeting on Tuesday 22 September 2020

Present: Jane Campbell (Chair), Angela Gunn (Secretary), Fraser Cottington, Bob Bennett, Les Blundell, Phil Kinch, Renton Righelato, Peter Scudamore and 27 others

1. **Apologies for Absence:** Ron Bryant, Irene Gilder, Rita Gulliver, Bridget Gurmey, Tim James, Nick & Joy Kightley and Maria Kinch
2. **Minutes of the 2019 AGM:** The minutes of the first LWT AGM held on 18th June 2019 have been publicly available on the LWT website for more than a year and no comments have been received. Acceptance of the minutes was proposed by Renton Righelato and seconded by Brian Bennett.

3. Reports:

a) **Treasurer's Report:** Phil Kinch

- A professional independent accountant, Delia Allott, has examined and accepted the 2019 accounts.
 - 2018 was half FOLL and half LWT so these have been combined in the column on the right to give a better year on year comparison.
 - Membership has remained fairly static but there has been an increase in subscriptions to Bird News.
 - We have received £ 275 from the Waitrose green token scheme and £190 from Fraser's talks to local groups.
 - Donations have increased mainly due to the GoFundMe campaign.
 - Gift Aid in 2019 is down slightly as the 2018 claim was for FOLL (to July 2018) was settled in 2018.
 - Bird seed costs have increased; these vary year-on-year.
 - Tools - a lot were bought in 2018 but very little in 2019. We have bought a lot more in 2020.
 - Project work – the Thames Water project is essentially completed. The 2019 planning application and Environment Agency costs relating to the Network Rail project have been reimbursed in 2020.
 - Lea Farm Lake transfer costs – this was to take on Lea Farm Lake and most of the costs for this will be in 2020.
 - At the end of the year we had health cash reserves. Some of this will be spent on the Network Rail Project and some will be set aside for future projects and towards a new hide.
- Renton thanked the treasurer for a clear display and presentation.

b) **Membership Report:** Les Blundell

- There was a 4% (25 people) increase in membership in 2019.
- This year started with rain and floods preventing access to the hides and a resulting drop in membership renewals. This was closely followed by the Covid-19 lockdown. Since the ease of lockdown renewals have increased and following some recent rare sightings there have also been several new members.
- We currently have 602 memberships (Individuals: 238 & 50 life; family: 137 & 20 life). Counting family membership as 2 people gives a total membership of 602. Subscriptions to Bird News are nearly 200.

- c) **Countryside Service Ranger Report:** Fraser Cottington for Simon Bartlam
- A lot of work goes on in the background.
 - Timing of the grass cutting in Teal & Tern Meadows has been moved from July/early August to late August after the barn owls have fledged.
 - LWT habitat management: there will be big challenges with reed cutting following the Network Rail project and Fraser has begun discussions with a reed specialist.
 - Tree management –N DPCS will continue their work, LWT has Network Rail money to spend over 3 years on either contractors, DPCS or both to manage the trees around Teal Scrape to make the flyway between there and LFL's SW corner. LWT will also be able to train volunteers for chainsaw usage to allow LWT autonomous tree management and augment DPCS's efforts at Lavell's and Sandford.
 - There has been an increase in fly tipping and litter especially after the covid lockdown as well as illegal bar-b-qs.
 - Lavell's car park, when open is approximately 8.30am to 5pm.
 - Simon is trying to bring the management of Sandford Farm Country Park under his remit.
 - Work parties were postponed during lockdown but have now resumed.

4. Election of Officers & Committee

The LWT constitution requires 3 trustees to retire. All are standing for re-election:

- Les Blundell, proposed by Fraser Cottington, seconded by Peter Scudamore
- Angela Gunn, proposed by Phil Kinch, seconded by Bob Bennett
- Renton Righelato, proposed by Bob Bennett, seconded by Peter Scudamore

5) Chair's Report: Jane Campbell

The chair's report was sent to all members in advance of the meeting. LWT committee has worked well in recent months to review hide security and reopening, walks and work parties. A large number of documents have been read to ensure all guidance is followed. Jane thanked the commit for all their hard work. Fraser's booking system has been key to allowing the reopening of Ron's Hide.

Fraser's report and vision

- This started with a picture of our recent visitor, the night heron.
- We have now progressed from Lea Farm gravel pit to Lea Farm Lake. This year there were approximately 30 tern chicks (our thanks to Ron Bryant & Alan Rymer for getting the rafts out at the right time) and both sand martin walls were occupied.
- There is now stock fencing from Middle Marsh to Sandford Lake thanks to Simon.
- Following the Network Rail Project a new viewing screen will be built overlooking the reed and sedge area immediately on the right upon entry, a temporary viewing screen will be positioned where the proposed new hide is to be, aimed at allowing members to see the new marsh, reed beds and whet their appetites for the new hide, possibly encouraging more donations.
- Bird species: hopefully the Berkshire site for wintering jack snipe. This year has included cattle egret, night heron, sand pipers, great white egret (x3), Mediterranean gull, and 2 pairs of little grebe have nested. All are encouraged to try new routes to discover other species.
- North spit hide – an adapted container is perhaps the preferred option as less likely to be vandalised. Possibilities include; solar panels for CCTV, web cams, USB ports inside the hide, night time recordings.
- Fundraising: GoFundMe has so far raised approximately £2.5k. Microsoft has confirmed that their fund matching is still available for up to £5K. Still need to establish eligible fundraising activities that qualify for fund matching. A potential sponsor for the Barn Owl webcam has

been found and someone has volunteered to prepare a “Where & When to Find Birds” for us. Please let us know if you have other suggestions.

- Website: this has been updated and now includes information posted by members on our Facebook page. Bob Bennett has expanded the wildlife section which now includes other wildlife. Reported sightings include; brown argus, purple emperor, grass snakes, water voles and lots of insects.
- The hide booking system is working well. Fraser will help with bookings if people are finding it difficult.
- The Greenway north of the Bailey bridge: Wokingham Borough Council says there are currently no stated plans for a cycle path.
- Future plans & vision:
 - a) signs along the Loddon to say “entering a nature reserve”,
 - b) A welcome pack (physical & on the website), family events, and engagement with schools.
 - c) Lodge Wood Lake area – viewing arrangement and possibly family events (bat nights, night under the stars, bush craft, bug hunts)
 - d) Sandford Lake – possibility of a new hide here
 - e) Tim Alexander has in the past used the area opposite Teal Hide for bird ringing and we hope there will be further ringing in the future. Teal Hide replacement a possibility (subscription hide)
 - f) Landfill viewing area
 - g) We need to engage with research establishments, e.g. satellite tracking of birds
 - h) Corporate volunteer days
 - i) Fundraising presence in precincts
 - j) I hope to increase membership to 1000 members by 2023 and bring in an average income (including donations) of £20 per family.

6. Questions

- I. Mike Pollard asked about the geographic spread of the members as he discovered LWT by accident. Is there a route to publicise LWT to other birding groups?

We have members in Germany, Wales and Devon who have moved away from the area. The most distant member is in Melbourne, Australia. He comes to the area annually for work and always fits in a visit to LWT. We also have member in Northamptonshire and Buckinghamshire but most members are within 15 miles of Reading and have an RG postcode.

Publicity is mainly through the leaflet, Berkshire Birds, Twitter and have also tried Instagram. We will look into other ways

We could offer Newbury District Ornithological Club a visit to Lea Farm Lake.

At the end of the meeting a link to a video of the recent work at Lea Farm was posted for people to see what has been achieved <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6yL9G4y1Xec>

Date of next meeting 15 June 2021