

## Lavell's Wetland Trust (LWT)

### AGM

Charity Number: 1176960

Earley St Peter's Church Hall on Tuesday 21 June 2022

### Minutes

**Present:** Jane Campbell (Chair), Angela Gunn (Secretary), Fraser Cottington, Bob Bennett, Les Blundell, Keith Boseley, Phil Kinch, Renton Righelato, Peter Scudamore and 19 others

**1) Apologies for absence:** Ron Bryant and 15 apologies

**2) Minutes of the third LWT AGM held on 15 June 2021** have been publicly available on the LWT website for several months and no comments have been received. Acceptance of the minutes was proposed by Brian Bennett and seconded by Keith Boseley.

**3) Reports:**

a) Treasurer – Phil Kinch:

The LWT accounts for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> December 2021 were sent out with the agenda. Our Independent Examiner, Delia Allott, has signed off the accounts which are now ready for submission to the charity commission.

The accounts show a separate fund for donations specifically for the hide. This will allow donors to see how the money they have donated for the hide has been spent. At the end of 2021 the hide fund was £28,243 plus £750 Gift Aid that has now been recovered. The latest total is £29,233 and to date £3,872 has been spent on planning applications and related costs. Currently, the biggest risk is inflation e.g. the price of wood is increasing. The rest of our income goes into a general fund.

There has been a £3,670 increase in the general fund in 2021; over £9,000 in the last two years but there are spending plans. As we now own Lea Farm Lake, our insurance premiums have increased; training is needed for tasks e.g. using chainsaws, and for buying equipment. We also need a reserve for emergencies as well as one for planned upgrades/improvements. There is also still money for work on the Network Rail project which had to be postponed due to Covid-19 (Network Rail have agreed to an extension to the project).

Question re our reserves and the funding needed. We have always had a reserve of £9,000 to cover emergencies e.g. vandalism. As announced at the last AGM, we are setting aside additional funds to build up a reserve for long term planned replacements and maintenance. It is always more difficult to get money for maintenance than for projects and in time we will need to replace items such as fencing. Further examples will be covered in Fraser's talk.

b) Membership – Les Blundell. Year ending 31<sup>st</sup> December 2021

Renewals via PayPal are paid regularly at the subscription rate. Renewals paid by cheque or direct bank transfer usually include a donation. At the end of 2021 we had 479 members and we have recently had our 500<sup>th</sup> member. This year we have only had 19 new members but none in the last two months. We currently, therefore, have just under 500 members.

Question: Are new memberships linked to sightings? There is no evidence to suggest a link. Last year we had 61 new members and for much of the year Ron's hide was either closed or was open with limited access.

#### **4) Election of Officers & Committee - Officers standing down/re-election**

LWT's constitution requires a third of the trustees to retire at each AGM. The following trustees will retire and are standing for re-election;

- Jane Campbell : proposed by Bob Bennett, seconded by Dave Noble
- Fraser Cottingham : proposed by Trevor Gayle, seconded by Sue Charnley

At this AGM, Renton Righelato is retiring as a trustee and Bob Bennett is standing down from the committee.

#### **5) Chair's Report : Jane Campbell**

Jane spoke briefly as she was losing her voice. She thanked the committed for all their hard work and welcomed Keith Boseley to the committee. Thanks were also given to all the volunteers at the work parties (regular monthly Sundays and the additional Tuesdays). Special thanks are also due to Simon Bartlam for continued support and to Andy Stickland for work on the solar pump and monitoring the Tern scrape.

Renton Righelato will be missed, he has overseen the Network Rail project, dealt with grant applications, governance and kept an eye on due diligence. Bob Bennett is standing down from the committee but will continue monitoring bird and other wildlife sightings.

We welcome help, contributions, suggestions from members. Please contact a member of the committee with suggestions or offers of help.

#### **6) Habitat Management, Work Parties & Events - Achievements – Fraser Cottingham**

There have been 127 species so far this year. January started well but was followed by a cold spell. White Fronted Geese landed at Lavell's Lake for the first time. Other sightings included White Stork, Cattle Egrets Green Shanks and Whimbrel and a Mediterranean Gull was around for 33 days. In 2-3 years, we hope to have a database where members can enter sightings.

The planning application for the new hide at Lea Farm Lake has been rejected and, as there is a three-month backlog, we will not be able to get a new application through in time to build the hide this year. The materials for the Waitrose hut have been ordered and work on this is planned to start on 5<sup>th</sup> July. Repairs to Ron's hide are still outstanding and the weatherboard cladding needs to be replaced. The wheelchair ramp is in poor condition; this is a relatively expensive repair as it has few users.

The container we were promised is no longer available but a replacement has been found and will be purchase in June/July at a cost of approximately £2,500. Following repairs on the Loddon footpath, Thames Water have provided an access gate to make easier for us to bring materials in.

The shingle island and Tern rafts had 20 nesting pairs in 2022. Gabion cages are being considered to repair these and, if successful, we will use them at Sandford Island. The Tern rafts need to be replaced over the next three years. We are looking into using the flotation platforms used by Thames Water; these are more expensive but have a longer life span than the drums currently in use.

Question- Would Thames Water lend us a floatation platform to try out?

Cattle grazing at Lea Farm is under discussion. Lea Farm Lake contains large fish with a value of £5,000-£8,000; we will work with Dinton to sell these and share the proceeds. We will continue to resist expansion of the Greenway along our stretch of the Loddon.

The Barn Owl box was to be installed whilst the new hide was built. There will be no power or WiFi so we will rely on solar power and bite sized video clips. We will also need a camera and hard disk which will cost approximately £600.

Predation of nesting wader species is an issue which must be dealt with. Transplantation of phragmites for the Network Rail project needs to be completed, the reed beds will develop over the next three years. Crassula is another problem which needs to be dealt with in 2022.

We are working with Dinton Pastures Country Services to replace and reposition Tern hide. The car park field was used for recreation during Covid-19 restrictions. It may be possible to close off part of the field to protect the nature reserve.

Looking to the future, there is the potential for family events and engagement with schools. Subscriptions costs have not increased. Would members be happy with e.g. a £2 per month donation?

Question - Would companies be willing to lend us e.g. lorries to transport materials as a contribution to their engagement with nature?

The AGM was followed by an interesting talk by Patrick Crowley on Peregrines in Berkshire which was well received.

Date of next meeting 19 June 2023. Correction, this will be on Tuesday 20 June 2023