

Lavell's Wetland Trust (LWT) AGM Newsletter 2023

Notice of Annual General Meeting

Welcome to LWT's 5th AGM newsletter, notice is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting of Lavell's Wetland Trust is to be held on 20 June 2023 at 7.30pm in Early St Peter's Church Hall, RG6 1EY. Additional parking will be available in the school car park which is adjacent to the hall.

Agenda for AGM

1) Apologies for absence

2) Minutes – for approval - The minutes of AGM held 21 June 2022 are available on the LWT website <http://lavells.org.uk/about-lwt/agm-minutes-and-reports/>

3) Reports:

a) Treasurer – Phil Kinch

The LWT accounts for the year ending 31st December 2022 are attached as an Appendix to this newsletter. I would like to thank our Independent Examiner, Delia Allott, for carrying out the examination once again.

Our accounts reflect the charity's activities, which are covered elsewhere in this report.

We currently have two Funds – the General Fund, covering all our normal activities, and a Restricted Fund set up to separately identify the income and costs relating to the proposed new hide at Lea Farm Lake.

We felt it was crucial to do that as members and other parties have donated specifically for the new hide project and so the costs and income should be clearly segregated from our other activities.

The main things that I would like to highlight this year are:

- **New Hide project**
 - We received a further £250 donations plus £820 Gift Aid (mostly relating to 2021 donations).
 - We have started to incur significant costs, professional advice needed to get planning permission and installing the planned access gate for the hide. We did the latter early to allow access to the new viewing screen.

- **Habitat Improvement project at Lea Farm Lake ("Network Rail project")**
 - We continued to make progress on the habitat improvements, although the extreme weather of 2022 has had an impact. The project is being carried out with support from the Trust for Oxfordshire Environment and with funding from the Network Rail's "No Net Loss of Biodiversity on the Greater West" Programme.

The costs this year have been purchase of a chainsaw and protective clothing (funded by LWT; the project covers training our volunteers and LWT buys the equipment) and digger hire, mainly to help with the new reedbed creation.

- **Waitrose Screen**
 - We received £1,000 from Waitrose in 2021 which we decided to use to build a viewing screen at Lea Farm Lake. We built the screen in 2022, ultimately building a more substantial structure at a cost of almost £2,000.

- **Lea Farm storage container**
 - We received a donation of £1,800 (plus Gift Aid) in 2021 to purchase a storage container, which we bought in 2022.

Overall, our General Fund fell by about £1,000 to £37,300 which is a healthy sum to cover imminent commitments including repairs and new cladding for Ron's hide and repair / improvement of the Tern rafts.

The New Hide Fund fell by £4,100 and now stands at £23,800 to complete the project.

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b) Membership

The overall membership number has remained steady. We gained 57 new members in 2022 and lost 52. Non renewals included several who had moved out of the area or had passed away. In July we reached the 500 member milestone and ended the year with 496 memberships.

c) Countryside Service Report

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

LWT's constitution requires a third of the trustees to retire at each AGM Philip Kinch is retiring. Angela Gunn is retiring and is standing for re-election.

Araba McMillan is proposed as Membership Secretary.

Notes

1. ***The present officers & committee;*** Chair-Jane Campbell, Secretary-Angela Gunn, Treasurer-Phil Kinch, Chief Visionary Officer-Fraser Cottington and, Ron Bryant. Committee: Peter Scudamore, Keith Boseley
2. ***The committee is always open to offers from members willing to help in a specific area.*** If you want to volunteer your service, please email secretary@lavells.org.uk or post to LWT c/o Dinton Pastures Country Park, Davis Street, Hurst, Reading, RG10 0TH with details of the skills you are offering.
3. ***If subscriptions are in arrears, members are not entitled to vote at the AGM***

4) Membership Fees and Membership Management

5) Chair's Report: Jane Campbell

LWT's committee has worked hard as always, and we hope we have delivered a superb nature reserve for you to enjoy. Phil Kinch is once again on top of our finances and projections; Angela Gunn is an efficient secretary who keeps us all in line; Peter Scudamore has led our bird walks and many work parties and keeps our feeders topped up; Ron Bryant is always there with practical skills; Keith Boseley continued to bring a wealth of practical and management skills to our work parties and Fraser Cottington continues to inspire. Sadly, Les Blundell who managed our membership for many years passed away suddenly at the beginning of the year. We are hugely grateful for the work Les did for us and miss his humour at our committee meetings. Many of you will have known Renton Righelato who was a trustee for many years. Renton stood down this time last year and passed away in October, we miss his support, enthusiasm, and huge amount of knowledge, particularly around conservation and governance issues. A memorial bench will be built in the Waitrose 'garden' to honour both Renton and Les.

Our wonderful volunteers have continued to support our monthly work parties plus an enthusiastic group have attended additional work parties on Tuesdays which have been ably led by Keith Boseley. These additional work parties have allowed us to progress larger tasks such as building the Waitrose Screen and repairing the access to Ron's hide. As always, we are indebted to Simon Bartlam and his team who have been incredibly helpful in many ways. Thanks too to all our members who continue to support us with their membership and donations. Their enthusiastic postings to our WhatsApp and FaceBook groups with accompanying photographs are of interest to many, including our members and supporters who are unable to visit the reserve.

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6) Habitat Management, Work Parties & Events - Achievements – Fraser Cottington

- Network Rail (ToE) – Last tasks
 - In August 2023 Phragmites rhizomes: we'll carry out our largest single reed transplanting ever, whereby we will use a mini excavator to dig out rhizomes from Lavell's, transport them by a large trailer to LFL, then move the excavator over for distribution along the Western edges of the NW and NE bay. It will take most of a weekend, so great volunteer support is a must
 - Tree pollarding in the SW corner – August 2023
- Planting Gorse continues in the SE boundary of Lea Farm Lake, we will probably extend planting for 5 more years to attract Linnet, Stonechat and passage passerines.
- The servicing and deployment of the rafts was put on hold due to avian flu in Black-headed Gulls. We now wait to let them take up residence on the shingle island, where we hope Common Terns are at a safe enough distance to not transmit the infection.
- After the disappointment of not getting WBC planning permission for our new hide behind the North Spit islands on Lea Farm Lake, we were successful at the next attempt.
- Building the 'Waitrose Bird Screen' at the NW corner of LFL was a major success.
- Keith has also transplanted many orchids into LFL edges.
- One of two bee and insect houses has been built next to Ron's, another is planned by the Waitrose Screen.
- Tuesday work parties have produced outstanding results, from hedgerow management, shrub planting to tree felling, to scrub creation and fencing. The photographs say it all.



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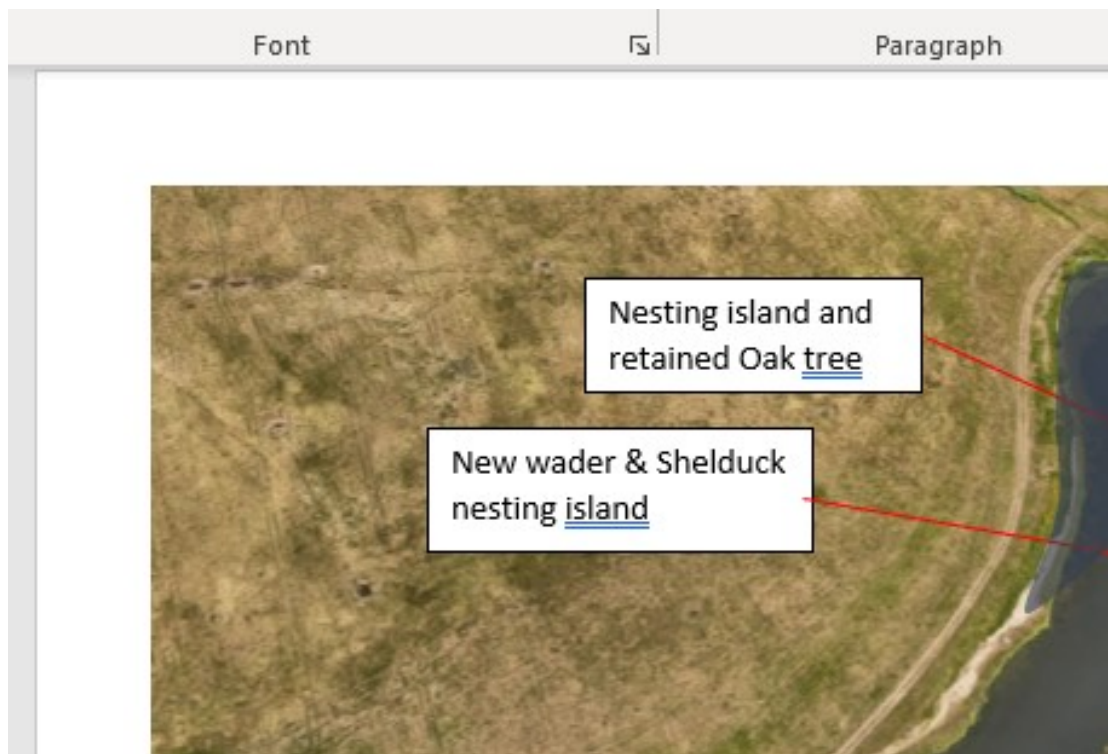
Management Plans

- The new hide build will commence with boring holes for stilt legs at the very end of July
 - The concreting pillar legs should take about a week to install
 - The timber hide construction should commence 8th August onwards
- More stock proof fencing alongside Lea Farm Lake (LFL) will be completed May 2023
- Repairs to Ron's hide are planned this late summer 2023
- Installing a 'landfill observation area' at the bottom of the car park field is still planned and Hurst Village Society have kindly donated £500 to fund it
- The sluice door in the ditch adjacent at Teal scrape is still not repaired
- LWT have begun work around Teal scrape to promote more scrub vegetation including Bramble and Blackthorn to benefit Bullfinch and warblers
- Cattle grazing discussions are on hold until we decide how to manage farmer access
- DPCS carried out island vegetation cutting regime on Sandford
- Path repair and protection on Sandford's islands from flooding and a proper sluice will follow all our projects beyond 2024. Realistically it will be 2025 onward before we can progress things.
- Summerlease Ltd did not go ahead with the idea of a solar farm on the far landfill, so we will wait until we can approach them with funding to manage the wild flower meadow idea

7) The vision for the future

ToE 2nd grant application

We were contacted by ToE, whom we refer to as Network Rail and offered the chance to bid for more money and we are happy to announce that we have been awarded £31,558.00 to carry out an ambitious islands, shallows and marsh expansion project.

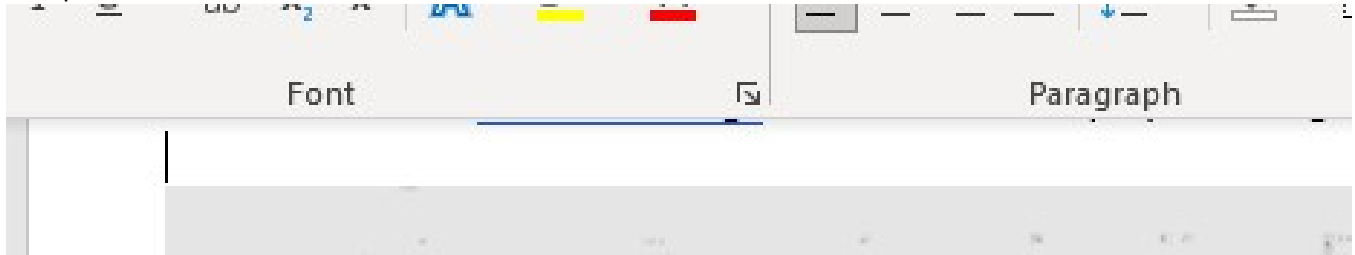


The diagram above shows how we will divide the South spit into three pieces, retaining all the established Oaks, on the far end and retaining the large Oak behind the Sand Martin wall, but creating an island around it, plus another island aimed at attracting breeding waders such as Lapwing, Oystercatcher, Redshank and Little-ringed Plover and in particular Shelduck where we will bury artificial burrow nests.

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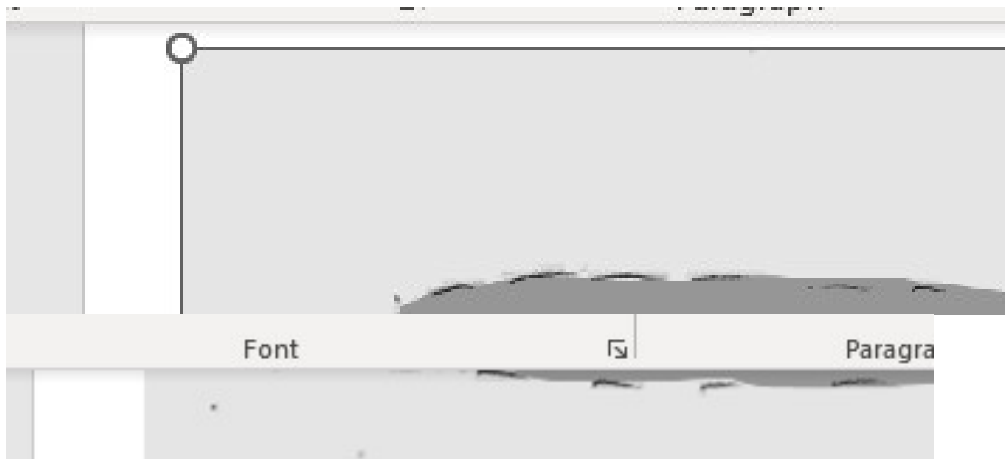
The 5000 cubic metres of spoil will be taken by dumper truck to the East shore to expand the marsh by hopefully as much as 20%, whilst creating hundreds of metres of extra shallow margins, all which will be in sight of the new hide, just 80 metres away.

On top of this we will be utilising specialist amphibious excavator to transform the old shingle island to make it a safe place to nest free from summer flash flood water levels.



The blue line is the average dry summer water level, the red dotted line is a wet summer line, we can reprofile by;

- With an amphibious digger, excavating the existing gravel island from 25m x 7m into two islands;
 - An island 14m x 3m
 - Shingle pushed up to create a relatively flat base 6-8" higher than current level
 - Keeping aside some stones to place on top of the gabion matting
 - If required adding some pea gravel to make it better for nesting birds
 - An island 5m x 2m just of stones, 12" higher than current island
- Towing out 12 gabion mats 200cm x 200cm x 20cm of stones and placing them on the 14m flat base
- Adding set aside gravel on top of the gabion matting
- Packing remaining shingle around the base of mats to create a shelf only above water in very dry summers



The figure above shows a larger and smaller island, but a



Gabion Mattir



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With the aid of the amphibious digger, we intend to make a few minor tweaks around the big island off the North spit to create a low water sand bar, plus an island that should also be a wader magnet in the warm dry summers, neatly placed in front of where the new reed bed will expand.

It is hard to know exactly how far we can expand the marsh out into the lake until we move all the spoil, but we are confident it will make a substantial positive impact and attract many more species that feed in and around shallows, I hope to see an increase in frequency of waders such as Black-tailed Godwit, Greenshank, Dunlin, Ringed Plover, Turnstone, Redshank, Wood Sandpiper, Ruff, Golden Plover, Snipe & Jack Snipe, plus more Teal, Egrets, wagtails, chats & pipits.

td & Bluesky, Maxar Technologies, The GeoInformation Group, Map data



A.O.B.

The AGM will be followed by light refreshments and a short talk by Ian Paine on '60 Years a Birder'

Date of next meeting 18th June 2024