

Lavell's Wetland Trust (LWT)

AGM

Charity Number: 1176960

Earley St Peter's Church Hall on Tuesday 20 June 2023

Minutes

Present: Jane Campbell (Chair), Angela Gunn (Secretary), Fraser Cottington, Keith Boseley, Phil Kinch, Araba McMillan, Peter Scudamore and 23 others

- 1) **Apologies for absence:** 8 apologies were received.
- 2) **Minutes of the fourth LWT AGM held on 21 June 2022** have been publicly available on the LWT website for several months and no comments have been received. Acceptance of the minutes was proposed by Keith Boseley and seconded by Trevor Guyatt.

3) Reports:

a) Treasurer – Phil Kinch:

Our Independent Examiner, Delia Allott, has examined and signed off the accounts for the year ending 31st December 2022. Donations for the new hide are in a restricted, ring-fenced fund which is shown in a separate column. All income and expenditure relating to the new hide will appear in this column. The fund currently contains £24K to complete the project. We maintain a reserve, as recommended by the Charity Commission. This is currently £9K and is intended to cover the costs of emergencies such as incidents which are not covered by insurance. We have also set up a maintenance fund to enable us to repair/replace our bigger assets, e.g. fencing, hides in the future. Maintenance costs for such large assets are greater than we can expect to receive via annual membership subscriptions.

In 2022 we bought a storage container, for which a member had donated funds, and erected a viewing screen, north of Ron's hide, partly funded by a donation from Waitrose. The general fund currently stands at £40K and we can recover a further £2,400 when the Network Rail project has been completed. Current commitments include repairs to Ron's hide, the Tern rafts, insurance, and bird food. There has been a slight increase in income from subscriptions. Other income has come from fishing rights, Reading Community Lottery, donations, and Gift Aid. Chainsaw training was paid for from the Network Rail project but LWT paid for the chainsaw and protective clothing.

When we opened the LWT bank account, the bank set us up with the wrong type of charity account so we have had to change to a new account. This will have implications for standing orders, members will be contacted about this.

Question: Phil Sigley asked about insurance cover for Ron's hide and what do other organisations e.g. RSPB do. The insurance policy is due for renewal next month and Peter will see if the hides can be covered.

b) Membership – Araba McMillan

Araba has recently been seconded to the committee as membership secretary to take over from Les. We currently have 486 members, 26 new members so far this year and 13 members have moved out of the area or passed away.

The committee has decided to move to a fixed membership year starting 1 February 2024 and the hide code will be changed a month later. Another change is the move to a new membership database, Membermojo, which will be a more efficient system. When members renew through Membermojo they will pay via the new bank account or the new LWT PayPal account. As a transition to a fixed annual renewal date, there will be a period with a reduced fee and, or an extension to 31 January 2024.

Subscriptions will be increased next year to £15 for Family membership, £12 for Individual membership and £3 for Lavell's Bird News. The new membership form has tick boxes to opt into receiving emails on e.g. plants, fungi which we plan to start in the new year. Members who do not use the internet should contact the LWT Membership Secretary c/o Dinton Pastures Country Park, Davis Street, Hurst, Reading RG10 0TH

Question: Will Life members still be able to pay for Lavell's Bird News. Yes, this is possible via Membermojo and you will be sent details.

Question: Does the new process take into account the need to sign a Gift Aid declaration? Yes, there is a tick box on the membership form to record Gift Aid status.

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

LWT's constitution requires a third of the trustees to retire at each AGM. Phil Kinch is retiring from the committee; Angela Gunn is retiring but standing for re-election

- Angela Gunn : proposed by Jackie Leslie, seconded by Ralph Watts
- Araba McMillan : proposed by Andy Stickland, seconded by Roger Stansfield.

5) Chair's Report: Jane Campbell

This year we lost two committee members. Renton Righelato stood down at the last AGM and died in November, he will be greatly missed. Les Blundell had a stroke and died in Australia in January; he had been our membership secretary for many years. We are grateful for all the work they have done.

Jane thanked all the committee for their contributions, Peter Scudamore for looking after the website and filling the bird feeders, Keith Boseley for organising all the extra week-day work parties and his great store of knowledge. Non-committee members also do a lot for us, Grant Evans has carried out a lot of the digger work, Bob Bennett looks after the bird, and other wildlife, sightings on the website and Andy Stickland looks after the solar powered pumps.

6) Chief Visionary Officer: Fraser Cottingham

The Bittern has been our logo for many years. Fraser showed us 3 designs of a possible new logo using a Kingfisher, there was a clear preference but a new logo is still under consideration.

This has been our best year ever for Bitterns with sightings at all times of the day. We have also seen Greenshanks, Little Ringed Plovers and an elusive Yellow-browed Warbler.

We are about to start building the new member's hide and last December we opened the Waitrose Screen, soon to be renamed the Renton Righelato Screen. A lot of Phragmites has been transplanted and a new storage container bought. Ron's hide repairs are still

outstanding and the Barn Owl box will be erected during the new hide build. We have achieved a lot, especially with the Tuesday work parties.

Work will begin on the new Lea Farm Lake hide in August 2023. We will need a timber staircase as we do not have a bank to build against. The legs will be 6' above ground and will be concrete blocks dropped into concrete bases. There will be solar panels on the rook to provide power for the Barn Owl camera. The new access gate is already in place and has the same code as Ron's hide. Grant has worked hard to create the finger islets.

We have been awarded a further grant (TOE2) of £31,555 once we complete the first project. This will be for the marsh extension project. An island approx. 50M long will be created and the level raised by 15" with the use of gabion cages. A 2nd smaller island may also be created. The islands should attract waders and Shelducks. A new Sand Martin wall will be built with an overhanging roof to help reduce predation by Jackdaws. Following completion of the work, there will be increased visibility of the area from Ron's hide. The spoil from this part of the project will be used to create small islets 70-78 M from Ron's hide and there will be a retaining shingle wall to limit erosion. WE are due to get the first £15K of the grant next April.

We are looking for a sponsor for the webcam, approx. £15per month. A bench will be built by the Waitrose screen to commemorate Renton and Les and, time allowing, the ditch by the island at the new hide will be widened. The Hurst Village Society are donating £500 for a lean on seat, with a viewing screen and overhanging section overlooking the landfill.

We are looking into the possibility of some improvements at Sandford Lake. Summerlease Ltd did not go ahead with the solar farm on the far landfill, so when funds allow, we will approach them with the idea of managing a wild flower meadow. Other plans include the replacement of the Tern rafts, cutting the reeds, repair of Ron's hide and a summer event possibly tied to the AGM.

Question: Bob Bennett asked if there would be access for the disabled to the new hide. No, the hide will be 6' above ground and the cost of providing access for the disabled would be greater than the cost of building the hide. Wheelchair access at Ron's hide has been used only twice. Access under the hide is a possibility.

The AGM was followed by an interesting talk by Ian Paine on 60 Years as a Birder which was well received.

Date of next AGM 18th June 2024.