



Minutes of the Fifty-Ninth Annual General Meeting (“AGM”) of the Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust (“DWCT” or the “Trust”)

Held at the Princess Royal Pavilion, La Profonde Rue, Trinity, Jersey, JE3 5BP on Thursday 5 October 2023 (the “Meeting”)

Trustees present

ROBERT KIRKBY (outgoing Chair)
LEE DURRELL (Honorary Director)
GERALD VOISIN (Honorary Secretary)
GARY CLARK (Honorary Treasurer)
MATTHEW HATCHWELL (Trustee and incoming chair – online)
SARAH COOK (Trustee)
RICHARD DAGGETT (Co-Opted Trustee)
SIMON DICKSON (Trustee)
MARY CURTIS (Trustee)
JONAS MULLER (Trustee)

In attendance

63 Members (the “Members”) not including Trustees.

IT WAS NOTED that Matthew Hatchwell, as the incoming Chair of the Trust’s Board of Trustees (the “Board”), launched the AGM by reading out a prepared statement to all attendees. However, due to difficulties with the audio link, Robert Kirkby as outgoing Chair read Matthew Hatchwell’s statement on his behalf. A copy of Matthew Hatchwell’s prepared statement is annexed to the minutes of the Meeting.

Following Matthew Hatchwell’s statement, Gerald Voisin was elected Chair of the Meeting (the “Chair”).

The Chair welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending this AGM, the 59th of the Trust. Further to this, the Chair confirmed that due notice of the Meeting had been provided in accordance with rule 8(2), a quorum was in attendance in accordance with rule 10(1) and that the Meeting was duly constituted and convened.

The Chair explained to the Meeting the composition of the Board and The Senior Management Team.

1. A resolution to approve the minutes of the 58th AGM

IT WAS NOTED that a copy of the minutes of the 58th AGM held on the 8th September 2022 (the “Minutes”) had been provided to the Trust’s members in tandem with the notice of the Meeting.

IT WAS FURTHER NOTED that the Minutes were proposed by Jonas Muller, seconded by Gary Clark, and unanimously approved by the Members.

2. A resolution to receive and consider the Annual Report of the Board of Trustees

IT WAS NOTED that the Trust’s 2022 Annual Report (the “Annual Report”) had been provided to the Trust’s members via the Trust’s website and a hard copy was tabled to the Meeting and made available to Members. IT WAS FURTHER NOTED that the Annual Report was proposed by Simon Dickson, seconded by Gary Clark, and unanimously approved by the Members

3. A resolution to receive and consider the accounts for 2022

IT WAS NOTED that the Trust’s accounts for the year ended 31 December 2022 (the “Accounts”) formed part of the Annual Report which had been provided to the Trust’s members via the Trust’s website and was contained within the hard copy of the Annual Report tabled to the Meeting and made available to Members.

IT WAS FURTHER NOTED that the adoption of the Accounts was proposed by Robert Kirkby, seconded by Mary Curtis and unanimously approved by the Members.

4. Retirement of outgoing trustees

The Chair advised that Mary Curtis had reached the end of her second term and would be retiring from the Board with effect from the close of the Meeting in accordance with rule 14(1). In addition, Robert Kirkby would be standing down from the Board with effect from the close of the Meeting.

IT WAS NOTED that Wendy Benjamin had resigned from the Board with effect from 1st February 2023 in accordance with rule 14(3)(a).

IT WAS FURTHER NOTED that as per rule 13(1) the Board had co-opted Richard Daggett to the Board as of 4th February 2023 and that as per rule 13(2) Richard Daggett would cease to be a co-opted trustee with effect from the close of the Meeting.

5. Announcement of the results of the ballot of members for the election of trustees

The Chair noted that Dominic Jones had withdrawn his application for appointment to the Board and as such ballot votes in his favour were null and void.

Further to the above and in accordance with rule 12(9), the Chair advised that the election via ballot had resulted in the formal appointment of Gillian Arthur and Richard Daggett to the Board with effect from the close of the Meeting.

6. A resolution to appoint auditors and authorise the board of trustees to agree their remuneration

The reappointment of Grant Thornton as the Trust’s auditors and authority from the Members for the Board to agree Grant Thornton’s remuneration was proposed by Richard Daggett, seconded by Gary Clark and unanimously approved by the Members.

7. Any other business

IT WAS NOTED that no further matters were raised for formal discussion and as such, the Chair closed the formal session of the AGM at 18:30 UK time and invited the Members to ask any questions they might have during the following, informal session of the AGM.

Gerald Voisin
Chair of DWCT’s 59th AGM

Date

Annexe 1

My name is Matthew Hatchwell and I'm honoured to have been elected by the Board of Trustees in June to succeed Rob Kirkby as the Board chair. I want to take this opportunity to thank Rob for his enormous commitment and contributions to the Trust since he joined the board in 2019.

I also want to apologise for not being there with you in person this evening. That was the plan, but then we discovered earlier this week that we had Covid in the family here so I was forced to cancel. I look forward to meeting many of you in person on a future occasion.

Before we consider the formal matters noted on the agenda for this meeting, I want to explain the format for this evening and the reasoning behind it.

As some of you may know, in recent weeks there has been a public campaign aimed at forcing the departure of certain Senior Management Team members here at Durrell. That has included posts of incorrect, ill-informed and/or misleading information on social media and the uninvited and unwanted private messaging of staff and volunteers here at the Zoo.

If legitimate criticism of Durrell as an organisation goes too far and becomes threatening behaviour targeted at particular individuals, it becomes an issue for the Board of Trustees since we have a duty of care towards all employees. That line has been crossed several times in recent days and weeks, including in the run-up to this meeting. Even though the behaviour might not be intended as threatening, it can have that unintended consequence, whether it is for staff trying to run successful fundraising events to raise money for the Trust's work around the world, for zookeepers working to ensure the welfare of all the animals in their care, or for senior managers making difficult and, yes, sometimes unpopular decisions every day to keep the whole show on the road.

In that context, the Board of Trustees is taking responsibility for running this year's AGM and we will only be addressing the items set out on the agenda circulated with the notice of the meeting rather than also having the usual annual update and themed talk presented by executive staff. There will be an opportunity for members to put questions to trustees for 30 minutes after the main business has been completed.

It's especially disappointing not to be able to share with you tonight in more detail some of the highlights of the past year, such as the recent Tortoise Takeover auction (raising over £700,000) and the fantastic achievements of the Trust in Jersey and around the world. The fact is that Durrell's conservation impact now is greater than at any other time in its 64-year history, with almost 300 employees carrying out vital work from rewilding and ground-breaking conservation science to fundraising and animal welfare. Among this year's many successes were the release of 10 Critically Endangered pygmy hogs into Manas National Park in India and 55 Critically Endangered pochards onto Lake Sofia in Madagascar. During 2022, we trained 375 conservation practitioners and aspiring conservationists from around the world and restored 86 acres of the Atlantic Forest in Brazil. In addition, the Trust has recently received a remarkable gift of over seven thousand five hundred hectares of land in Scotland on a 100-year peppercorn lease for re-wilding of a highly denuded site.

As Durrell's programmes expand, the systems we use to manage our programmes must evolve as well. Behind the scenes, enormous progress is being made to professionalise the accounting, grant management and other systems needed to support not only Jersey Zoo but also field programmes in multiple jurisdictions around the world. Further work will be taking place in the near future on an enhanced HR management system. That means change, which is never universally popular, but change we must – to keep pace with (or ideally outperform) best practice, to remain compliant with ever-rising regulatory standards, and to access new funding sources on the scale needed to support our growing field programmes.

Most of all, change and scaling up are necessary to respond to the massive challenges posed to the natural world by climate change and by the accelerating collapse of biodiversity across huge swathes of the planet. If Durrell is to make a meaningful difference by helping save species from extinction, we need to grow.

One of the areas where we will continue to evolve is around communications. We have a fantastic communications tool with DodoHub, which is full of regular updates and information from every department in the Trust.

It is clear however that there have been communications gaps in various areas over recent months where further facts and circumstances could have been better explained in order to help staff, volunteers or the general public understand why a certain conclusion has been reached or action taken. And communicating is a two-way street: we need to improve our listening to each other too, for example through continued annual staff surveys and focus groups.

It is inevitable in any organisation that, despite best efforts to engage with staff and to build consensus, there will be decisions that do not command universal support. It is the responsibility of senior managers to make difficult decisions based on the best evidence available and for the overall good of the Trust, and our responsibility as Trustees to scrutinise those decisions and ensure that they are fiscally responsible and in line with the Trust's charitable purposes.

What it means for us all — Trustees included — is that decisions are made from time to time that represent either a compromise between different points of view, or else outcomes with which we as individuals might disagree altogether. In all cases, it must be what's best for the Trust as a whole that prevails. That is our shared goal. It is no exaggeration to say that the natural world as we know it is facing an existential crisis. Confronting that challenge must be our over-riding priority.

In closing, I want to thank once again the members who've turned out in such numbers to be here this evening. Jersey Zoo has one of the smallest catchment areas (in terms of human population) of any zoo in Europe. Your support is second to none and is very much appreciated.

Again, I'm very sorry not to be there with you this evening. That means that we need to elect an alternative chair for this meeting. Gerald, over to you in the room for that.

Thanks everyone.