



## Suffolk Tree Warden Network (STWN)

### Annual General Meeting (AGM)

**Saturday 1st April 2023 1.30pm – 3.30pm**  
**Great Waldingfield Village Hall, Lavenham Road, CO10 0SE**

## Minutes

**In attendance:** John Russell, Terence Carter, Patti Seaward, Richard Frost, Muriel Austin, Andrew Goodall, John Preston, Elizabeth Aldred, Perry Penn, Drake Davis, Harry Bryer, Jill Fisher, Janice Frost, Joanne Ford, Ian Dicker, Fe Morris, David Wright, David Appleton, Alistair Graham Kerr, Colin Lay, Roger Worboys, Helen Bynum, Danny Thorrington, Jasmin Gagen, Kate Hancock, David Taylor, Kate Poland, Sally Mittuch, Richard Webb, Juliet Hawkins, Christine Fisher Kay, Jon Stokes (TTC), Sam Village (TTC), Clare Bowen (TTC).

### **Richard Frost, Interim Chair, welcomed everyone to the AGM:**

‘Thank you for travelling to Great Waldingfield, for what was for many of you, a long way to come. I’d especially like to welcome The Tree Council, Sam Village (National Tree Warden Scheme Coordinator), Clare Bowen (Director of Programmes, Partnership & Comms), and Jon Stokes (Director of Trees, Science & Research), and I’m looking forward to their exciting presentation later this afternoon.

And thank you to David Taylor for arranging the use of this excellent Village Hall and volunteering to take us on a walk around the Old School Community Wood later this afternoon.

Our last AGM was held online in October 2020. Covid & other unforeseen circumstances have hindered our attempts to arrange an AGM over this period and I apologise for such a long delay.

So, to business’.

### **1. Apologies**

**Patti Seaward, secretary, read out the apologies:** Graham Pleasants, Jenny Eckersley, Jeremy Quinlan, Jane Hall, Colin Hawes, Lisa Simmons, Barbara Morris, Claire Macaulay, John Corker, Tanya Cotter, Ben Robinson, Nick Watts, Anna Whitehurst, Edwin Van Ek, Mike and Pauline Ewart, Anne Westover, Richard Parmee, Robert Spreadbury, Time Cutler, Julia Groves, Jeanna McCarthy, Kelda McChesney, Rosemary Jones, Ken Jackson, Jeannie Buckingham, and Gary Battel.

### **2. Minutes of the previous AGM**

Chair

Richard Frost, Interim

The previous Minutes had been distributed prior to the AGM. Richard asked if there were any questions on the previous Minutes – there were none. He therefore asked that they be approved. This was proposed by Alistair Graham Kerr, seconded by Terence Carter, and approved unanimously.

### 3. Annual report

Richard Frost. Interim Chair

'Firstly, I'd like us to remember three Tree Wardens who have sadly died:

**John Forbes, TW Martlesham died September 2021**

**Michael Jennings, TW Norton died March 2022**

**William Cook, TW for Nacton died February 2023**

Their legacy lives on in the landscapes they helped to transform for the benefit of all.

Second, I would like to thank:

**Gary Battell** (Suffolk County Council (SCC) Senior Woodland Advisor and Non-executive Advisor to STWN), for his unwavering and longstanding support to STWN, and Tim De-Kyser (Suffolk County Council (SCC) Head of Natural & Historic Environment) for the funding and opportunities SCC have provided us.

**The Tree Council** for their tree offers, including 500 trees at Redgrave Park and more recently, nearly 3 km of hedgerow to tree wardens: their Branching Out magazine, training modules, webinars, excellent Good Tree Planting guide and many other materials.

**The Woodland Trust (WT)** for their annual tree and hedgerow packs for tree wardens with 3,400 trees and 4.5km of hedgerow this season, which is increasing to 6km hedgerow and 5,000 trees next planting season.

**The Queens Green Canopy (QGC)** for their passion & enthusiasm to increase tree planting for the late Queen Elizabeth II 2022 Platinum Jubilee, which bought tree planting to so many more communities. The last official QGC tree planting will take place this May at Trinity Park Ipswich. The 3 trees planted will be oaks grown from Suffolk acorns grown in our very own tree nurseries and Lady Clare has suggested that they will be planted by the Duchess of Edinburgh.

**Kelda McChesney** for supporting us in her joint role working with SCC and WT. We are grateful for the exceptionally high quality of support she provides.

**The many landowners** we have worked with who are so enthusiastic about tree and hedgerow planting at both small and large scale to enhance Suffolk's landscape.

There are **many more individuals, organisations, and councils** than I can mention today that I extend our thanks to for their hard work.

**Most importantly of course, thanks to each and every tree warden and tree nurse** for all you do to improve our treescape and communities in your parishes.

We've been particularly pleased that we have had a higher than usual uptake of new tree wardens so far this year, many of whom are here today.

It's often said that farming is the most important job in the world. I think that what we do can be seen as farming: we farm carbon, biodiversity and the ecosystem services that trees and hedgerows provide. This all contributes to the fight against Climate Change, and if we don't solve Climate Change, we won't solve anything.

And thank you to **our Executive Committee** for their patience and tireless work in all they do to improve our operations. Sadly, **Jeannie Buckingham** will be stepping down from her role on the Executive Committee and **John Russell** is planning to retire from the Executive Committee once we have found a new Treasurer. So, on behalf of STWN I'd like to present them both with these STWN TPOs which I'll now read out:

'This certificate is legal documentation that Jeannie Buckingham and John Russell are under the protection of the Suffolk Tree Warden Network Tree Preservation Order No 00/01'

and given their long service we felt they might want to get hammered tonight!.

(They were given TPO certificates, a bottle, and engraved hammers, each stating 'STWN legend, thank you for your time & talent').

Now, for the rest of the report I'm not going to list everything that has happened over the past 2 years. I think it's more fitting that the members of the Executive Committee, who have worked incredibly hard and achieved so much with our many projects, give us short presentations, some of which are accompanied by PowerPoint presentations (see downloadable files). Importantly, these projects also demonstrate that we are a learning organisation, learning amongst ourselves and educating the public'.

## **STWN Community Tree Nursery Project**

**Fe Morris, lead on the Community Tree Nursery Project** presented PowerPoint slides on the progress made since the project started from Autumn 2020. The recruitment of new nurses has grown so that there are 50 members now involved.

Over 5000 of our trees were distributed through the winter 2022/23. Saplings have gone to environmental groups, social welfare projects, community plantings, schools, Queen's Green Canopy, biodiversity net gain projects and agroforestry projects.

## **'Alive in Five'**

**David Appleton, lead on the 'Alive in Five' collaboration with major partners**, described how the leaflet was developed in response to the climatically difficult circumstances for growing trees in Suffolk and to strategically address ways to improve successful planting.

The leaflet is available on the STWN website. David encouraged members at the AGM to help to spread the message.

## **Native Black Poplars (NBP)**

**David Appleton, lead on the Native Black Poplars Project in Suffolk** presented PowerPoint slides on the progress of this project. Further to the project of rediscovery and recording of native black poplars in 1980s, STWN is involved in a project to increase pure NBP numbers in Suffolk, working with the County Recorder, SBIS (database), and Dedham Vale and Nowton Park clone banks.

120 saplings were planted 2022-23 and 280 cuttings were taken 2023 (saplings and new clone trees). We need your help to find wetland planting sites.

## **Events**

**David Appleton, Events Manager, had brought copies of the Events Schedule** which were distributed to attendees at the AGM. There are tree warden events and training and woodland walks.

He also described how we have STWN leaflets and a STWN-branded gazebo which we are taking to many county and local shows across the Suffolk. For example, STWN is joining the Farm4Future stand at the Suffolk Show at the end of May/beginning of June.

## **Team Wilder**

**David Appleton presented PowerPoint slides on the developing** Suffolk Wildlife Trust-led digital mapping of environmental projects to create 'critical mass' to change public and political opinion. The aim is for 1 in 4 Suffolk citizens to become engaged. STWN is involved.

## **Traditional Orchard Project**

**Jeannie Buckingham, lead on the Traditional Orchard Project** was unwell and unable to attend the AGM so David Appleton presented the PowerPoint presentation on her behalf, about growing traditional fruit Trees at 2 Fields Community Tree Nursery.

## **Publicity and promotion of STWN**

**Helen Bynum, lead on communications and publicity for the network** described the different ways in which we are reaching the public:

- Attendance at events: e.g., Suffolk Show, East Anglian Game Fair, Martlesham Fair, Little Ouse Headwaters Project, Langham Walled Gardens,
- STWN Gazebo, tablecloth and flag funded from the SCC Community Tree Nurseries budget,
- Website: Specifically focused as a point of contact & information but not overloaded with information. Since we went live last year there have been 3575 page views and 1580 visits which demonstrates the level of engagement. 72% of these are UK visits, but 22% were from USA, Netherlands, Ireland, Germany, India, Israel, Belgium, and France - 261 visits in the last month,
- Through the Woodland Trust (WT) Tree Packs where STWN plays an essential role in distribution,
- Alive in Five (Kelda McChesney SCC/WT Assistant Tree and Woodland Officer) and thanks to Gary Battell and Tim de Keyser at SCC
- Social Media:
  - Twitter - 344 followers since October 2021 comprising tree lovers, artists, farmers, environmental groups, Suffolk groups, organizations we work with TTC, WT, SWT, SWT Farm Advice, SBIS, LOHP, River Waveney Trust, Hedgelink, BTO, Dedham Vale AONB. Popular tweets have included native black poplars and floating seeds in the autumn. #Thicktrunktuesday – has been immensely popular - likely generates the views from overseas.

Facebook/Instagram. We are developing this as the next stage of our social media, but we are likely to give TikTok a miss.

## **Community Inclusion**

**Colin Lay, lead on health and safety, and safeguarding, and manager at a well-being hub,** described how since COVID there has been an increase in families and people interested in tree planting, as well as businesses employee supported volunteering.

It is clear that future problems can only be solved by partnership working. Colin talked about working with neuro diverse groups, and collaboration with the Green Light Trust, Redgrave Park, and planting 350 hedgerow trees at the Food Museum.

Planting trees enhances the volunteer experience and gives people ownership – those who grow trees want to know where they are going and whether the recipient will look after them.

The Tree Council Good Seed Guide is very helpful, and children love the Tree Council postcards.

As a Network all these activities cost money and we hope that if we become a charity, this will help.

A question was asked about natural regeneration and colonisation. Getting the seeds and getting them onto scarified ground is time consuming but is more effective. Fe added that we need to target both approaches.

#### **4. Financial report**

John Russell, Treasurer

‘Good afternoon, Ladies and Gentlemen. My name is John Russell and I have the honour of being Treasurer of the Suffolk Tree Warden Network.

I have pleasure in presenting the Income and Expenditure Accounts for the Network for the 12 months to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022, after which I will bring us up to date with our Accounts for the year to yesterday.

As you will have seen from the Accounts circulated with the AGM Agenda, we started the year with a balance of £3541.26.

The major financial event during the year was the provision of monies from Suffolk County Council, through the good offices of our friend and advisor, Gary Battell, for the establishment of Tree Nurseries throughout Suffolk, as described by my colleague Fe Morris. They provided us with a budget of £34,590 over a two-year period, on the basis that any item over £1000 would be ordered and paid for directly by the Council, with smaller items being funded by the Network and refunded by the Council at regular intervals. This was so that the Council could reclaim VAT on the larger amounts, whilst not being troubled with having to administer the many smaller sums.

You will see from the accounts that the expenditure during the year is larger than the amount refunded. This shortfall has been recovered in the following year to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023.

David Appleton has overseen the purchase of Tree Warden Fleeces, and these have been sold to our members at cost and, I believe are available to purchase today.

We have been fortunate to have received donations during the year, particularly from Redgrave Park and Thornton as a thank you for our help with sourcing and planting trees and hedgerows for their grounds.

Although not showing in our accounts, a company called Sicon has generously funded the purchase of tree guards, stakes, and mulch mats to the tune of £10,000 in both the 21/22 year and also 22/23. Sadly, with all the cutbacks presently in place, this will not continue.

We have also held various grafting and Fungi courses during the year, which have generally been self-financing.

Apart from the expenditure on the Tree Nursery projects, which I reiterate is refunded by Suffolk County Council, we have purchased some equipment, which is available for use by members when tree planting and have spent small sums on computer expenses to keep our database up to date and also on Public Liability Insurance, which is necessary to protect us, when planting and dealing with the public.

In summary, our income during the year amounted to £3820.64 and expenditure was £5709.84, leaving us with a balance on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 of £1652.06.

During the year to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023, we have continued to purchase items for the Tree Nurseries and be refunded by Suffolk County Council. The final balance of expenditure will be refunded during April/May 2023 and will appear in the Accounts to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024.

We have been fortunate to have the support of the Council in the fact that they have funded the redesign of our website and the transition to a more user-friendly data-base system.

Donations during the year have included a further £700 from Redgrave Park and £500 from the Helmingham Hall Estate. These, again, are for help with advice and the provision of trees for their estates.

We have also received this year some £657 from Polstead Press as a percentage of their monthly income and for this we are extremely grateful.

Various courses have been held over the year, and again, these have been largely self-funding.

David has organised the purchase of Network Polo and Tee shirts, and these are also available for purchase today. Thank you, David.

Again, in summary, our income to the date of writing this report, 21<sup>st</sup> March, has been £8811.37 and expenditure £6566.64, leaving us with a balance of £3896.75.

I hope that you will agree that your committee is using the Network's money wisely and would ask you to approve the Accounts to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 accordingly.

If you have any questions, I will do my best to answer them.

Thank you'.

John Preston commented that he has provided equipment and resources voluntarily and through STWN for community and parish benefit and feels his parish should recognise STWN for this. He intends to approach his parish council to ask for a donation.

Councillor's locality budgets were suggested as a helpful source of funding.

John Russell then asked if the accounts might be approved. This was proposed by Helen Bynum, seconded by David Appleton, and approved unanimously.

## **5. Election of STWN Committee**

As confirmed in the AGM papers, the current Committee is made up as follows:

**Interim Chair**, Richard Frost; **Treasurer**, John Russell; **Secretary**, Patti Seaward; and **Committee members**: Jeannie Buckingham, Fe Morris (co-opted), David Appleton (co-opted), Colin Lay (co-opted), Helen Bynum (co-opted), and Graham Pleasants (co-opted).

Jeannie Buckingham has confirmed that she is resigning from the committee at this AGM, and John Russell wishes to resign as treasurer but is prepared to continue in post while we seek a replacement. All committee members stood down pending election. There were no new nominations.

John Russell proposed Richard Frost as Chair. This was seconded by Janice Frost (no relation) and carried unanimously.

Patti Seaward proposed John Russell as Treasurer with the promise that a replacement is sought as he wishes to stand down. This was seconded by Fe Morris and carried unanimously.

Richard Frost proposed Fe Morris, David Appleton, Colin Lay, Helen Bynum, and Graham Pleasants as Committee members. This was seconded by Ian Dicker and carried unanimously.

John Russell proposed Patti Seaward as secretary. This was seconded by Helen Bynum and carried unanimously.

## **6. Charity Incorporated Organisation (CIO) recommendation and vote**

Richard Frost gave a short PowerPoint presentation and read out the supportive comments for becoming a CIO that had been made by members who could not attend today.

STWN has also discussed CIO status at 2 online members meetings.

### **The pros and cons:**

As an unincorporated organisation we have achieved a massive amount.

#### **Drawbacks:**

- We don't have a legal identity. Individual members are personally responsible for any debts and contractual obligations.
- If we make a profit, we'd have to pay taxes.
- There are many sources of funding that we cannot access. This leaves us financially vulnerable and limits our aspirations. Ideas without money are just ideas.

#### **Advantages:**

- Incorporation means limited liability.
- A well-recognised, trusted structure.
- Greater access to grants and applications more likely to be approved.
- Don't pay tax.
- Greater Public recognition.
- Claim 25% Gift Aid on donations.
- Free plots for our gazebo at many events.
- Asset lock (meaning our assets can't be used for personal/private gain).
- Annual Reporting to Charity Commission but not to Companies House or HMRC.
- Could employ people, own land, and property.
- CIO status unlocks access to digital tools which will help us run and promote STWN at greatly reduced costs.

Alistair Graham Kerr commented on his experience of the positive benefits of CIO. Sam Village confirmed that CIOs were introduced in 2013. David Wright advised the meeting the British Local Histories Society – Tower Insurance might well be worth approaching in future.

### **Voting proposal**

Richard Frost proposed that the Suffolk Tree Warden Network make an application to the Charity Commission to register as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. This was seconded by Richard Webb and carried unanimously.

## **Conclusion of formal business**

### **7. Presentation by the Tree Council - update for STWN AGM**

(downloadable)

Sam Village, Jon Stokes &  
Clare Bowen

**Woodland Walk:** Attendees were then invited to join a walk through 'Old School Community Wood' led by David Taylor, Great Waldingfield Tree Warden.