

# Wiltshire Wildlife Community Energy

LESS CARBON, MORE WILDLIFE



## Minutes of the Wiltshire Wildlife Community Energy 2023 AGM held over Zoom at 2pm on 27<sup>th</sup> September 2023.

Prior to the meeting, the Directors met and declared the meeting quorate based on the number of members in the 'waiting room'. The meeting was recorded. In total, there were 33 participants. Charlie Forrester (CfR) was the meeting 'host'.

***Please refer to separate slide deck for details on agenda items.***

### **1 Welcome & Intro (Julian Barlow)**

The Chair, Julian Barlow opened the meeting by welcoming everybody to the virtual set up and commented that this option was chosen to allow more people to be able to attend, and ultimately reducing carbon emissions from less travel.

Members were advised to ask questions and communicate through the chat function. Julian then introduced the various presenters who would contribute to the meeting.

### **2 Technical Performance of Solar Farms (Tom Cosgrove from CfR)**

Tom talked through the slides on the technical performance of both sites, noting that it was a good year across the portfolio in general.

### **3 Land Management (Rob Gilies)**

Rob highlighted the continued focus on biodiversity and how the sites had good results on bird, butterfly and invertebrate species. The partnership with WWT and its benefits was highlighted. Rob also commented on being able to attend local community events and to speak about the importance the role of solar can play in increasing biodiversity.

### **4 Community Fund (Jon Bateman and Lucy Normington)**

Jon introduced himself as the new Chair of the fund and spoke about how the fund operates. He invited any members that were interested in being part of the panel to get in contact. Jon also spoke about how the demand for Community Funding had grown and current application statuses.

Lucy then spoke about the number of projects WWCE had funded across the whole of Wiltshire and how the fund was keen to keep supporting as many as possible.

There was a short silent video from an award recipient shared with the meeting

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## 5 PR & Communications (Russell Abbott)

Russell talked through how a targeted strategy had expanded outreach and increased presence. WWCE has joined the Climate Coalition.

He invited all members to follow WWCE on social media and mentioned that future plans for this coming year include a website revamp to bring the site up to date and ensure it's mobile friendly.

## 6 Finance (Angela Wright)

Angela presented the high level financial results for the year ended 31 March 2023, which resulted in a loss before tax of £7k ultimately due to a higher member interest rate paid in the period than the previous year.

Angela mentioned that forward projections were now very positive due to some high PPA's locked in for the sites. As a consequence of this, the group hopes to pay member interest of 7% and increase Community Fund donations this year to £40k, and to maximise these going forwards. The accounts for the year were formally adopted.

## 7 Energy Champion and future plans (Jess Thimblebey & Julian Barlow)

Jess then spoke about her 'keeping warm this winter' project, the success of last year's efforts and plans for the next 12 months. Over 380 clients were advised on energy saving options and the events were widely praised as a successful WWCE initiative.

Julian then ran through our 2024-25 outlook and plans. He emphasized the need to meaningfully measure our investment in carbon reduction and how the group has joined the Biodiversity net gain scheme.

In terms of future investment, the Petersfinger and Silverwood projects would be separately funded with new fund-raises to support the investment.

## 8 Proposals and Resolutions (Julian Barlow)

Tom initiated a poll over which members could vote on the following resolutions.

- 1) Proposal to pay members 7% interest this year (result: Approved)
- 2) Proposal to donate £40k to the Community Fund (result: Approved)
- 3) Proposal to re-elect Rob Gilies to the Board as he retires on rotation (result: Approved)

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4) Proposal to re-elect Russell Abbott to the Board as he retires on rotation (result: Approved)

5) Proposal to re-elect Lucy Normington to the Board as she retires on rotation (result: Approved)

The table below shows the proxy vote results

Resolution	In favour	Against	Skipped
1	34	0	0
2	31	0	3
3	30	0	4
4	30	0	4
5	29	0	5

## 9 AOB (Julian Barlow)

Sylvia Wyatt was introduced to the members as the new Co-opted member of the Board from WWT. Sylvia gave a brief summary about her background and interest in the group.

With no further questions or matters arising, the meeting then closed at 3.05pm.

### Questions arising during the course of the meeting in the chat function;

**Q. Do honey bees out compete other species and is there any reduction in biodiversity because of this?**

A. (Rob Gillies)

There is evidence that native bee species have increased on site. We only have 2 small hives so we don't believe the bees on site are a threat to native ones.

**Q. There is a high flood risk noted at the Petersfinger site. What are we doing about that?**

A. (Tom Cosgrove)

The flood risk doesn't prohibit solar development it just means that we need to raise compromised or fragile infrastructure above the flood line. There is only a small portion of the solar farm to which this applies.

**Q. As a group that seems to be doing well, do we have any translatable actions we can share with other Community Energy groups?**

A. (Rob Gillies)

Yes, we are members of Community Energy England and use this as knowledge sharing, we're also happy to attend and contribute to workshops etc... that may help other groups.

**Q. Will the Community Fund be reduced from £40k next year back to the £10k amount?**

A. (Angela Wright)

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The hope is that we can continue to maximise Community Fund donations in the future, so we anticipate that next year and in future we can also donate in excess of the £10k that we have been making in the past, subject to affordability. The £40K will be a minimum figure allocated if WWCE continues to achieve its financial objectives.