

	AGM Questions & Comments	Response:
1	<p>Tree Planting 14th Sept Radio Norfolk 8.15am after care? Norfolk's dry soil climate change would natural regeneration be the answer? NWT spoke very well thought provoking.</p>	<p>Thank you; this interview was in response to the issue that some planted trees on the Norwich Distributor Road had not survived. Each situation needs to be carefully assessed to decide the correct approach, including the type of soils, and the reason for establishing trees in the first place. Tree planting has it's place, but after-care is essential, so the resources for this must be included. However, it is no substitute for destroying valuable habitats. Damage to existing habitats should be avoided, but where damage is unavoidable a more holistic approach to mitigation is required, looking at the range of habitats and species affected. Natural regeneration may be appropriate as part of the mtigation package, and has the potential for a more diverse habitat developing.</p>
2	<p>Do you plan to oppose the barrier across The Wash with the unknown (but probably disasturous) effect on the wild birds movements?</p>	<p>Yes we do; we have voiced our concerns about it a number of times, as we think it would destroy one of the most important estuaries for migratory birds and other biodiversity in the UK, and this damage could not be effectively mitigated. Our latest news release on the subject is on our website here: <a href="https://www.norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk/news-and-articles/news/all-news/2023-05-12-controversial-wash-barrage-pla">https://www.norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk/news-and-articles/news/all-news/2023-05-12-controversial-wash-barrage-pla</a>. AS the site is protected by law we think the proposal for a barrier is untenable.</p>
3	<p>Please will you continue to oppose the Norwich Western Link Road. Now money seems likely to be made available by cancelling HS2. This is VITAL.</p>	<p>Yes we will continue to oppose the proposed Norwich Western Link road as we do not think the damage it will cause to nature can be mitigated. We have recently written to the Secretary of State for Transport about central government financial support for the development. Our latest statement on the issue is on our website here: <a href="https://www.norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk/news-and-articles/news/all-news/wildlife-charity-raises-road-funding-concerns-with">https://www.norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk/news-and-articles/news/all-news/wildlife-charity-raises-road-funding-concerns-with</a></p>

4	Has any progress been made concerning more seating at Foxley Wood?	Thank you for following up on the question of additional benches at Foxley Wood. We are planning to undertake our review as part of access classification work across our nature reserves later this year. As mentioned in our June reply, we have five benches currently and have tried to balance the needs of tired legs and the desire to avoid the Wood becoming too cluttered or park like. Our review will consider your comments as part of balancing the overall seating provision and character of the woodland.
5	Please instate a hedgerow management scheme qualificaion to promote better hedgerow cutting & knowing when to leave alone?	Gareth's response: Courses at agricultural colleges and by Lantra ( <a href="https://www.lantra.co.uk/about/about-lantra">https://www.lantra.co.uk/about/about-lantra</a> ) will include training on hedgerow management and accredited educational establishments are the best institutions to do this. The Wildlife Trusts have produced guidance on hedgerow management here <a href="https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/wildlife/managing-land-wildlife/how-manage-hedgerow-wildlife">https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/wildlife/managing-land-wildlife/how-manage-hedgerow-wildlife</a> . Norfolk Wildlife Trust has a number of videos and FAQs about hedgerow establishment and management on its website, and we have been referring landowners to the excellent advice on the PTES website on hedgerow management <a href="https://ptes.org/hedgerow/managing-hedgerows-top-tips/">https://ptes.org/hedgerow/managing-hedgerows-top-tips/</a> and advice from Hedgelink <a href="https://hedgelink.org.uk/guidance/hedgerow-management-advice/">https://hedgelink.org.uk/guidance/hedgerow-management-advice/</a> . Now we have expanded the capacity of our Nature Recovery Team we are working on developing a programme for disseminating best practice on hedgerow management to landowners for next year. We do not, however, offer a qualification scheme; we would not have the resources for this. Kevin: NC have never offered any kind of in-house qualifications to external group, we do not have anyone who could deliver this type of scheme - the CWS team may have carried out this type of training or advice in the past with private land owners?

6	1. What influence does the trust have on house building strategy? I.E. Should we be building up not out and how do we include not exclude nature in developments.	The Trust is consulted by local planning authorities in Norfolk both on their Local Plans and on individual planning applications if they are likely to affect County Wildlife Sites or our nature reserves. In our advice on Local Plans, which are strategic planning documents, we recommend policies on development which avoid damage to important to wildlife sites and encourage wildlife-friendly development proposals including open spaces with wildlife habitats.
	2. Is there a policy/ long-term strategy to connect reserves, irrespective of which organisation manages them?	The Environment Act 2021 introduced the legal requirement for Local Nature Recovery Strategies to be developed by County Councils. These strategies are supposed to identify measures to rebuild ecological connectivity within the county, and we will be working with Norfolk County Council to identify the best way to reconnect all areas of high wildlife value, including nature reserves, County Wildlife Sites and Sites of Special Scientific Interest, regardless of who manages them. We are also working with farmers on landscape scale projects to reconnect and recover nature throughout Norfolk, such as on the Wendling Beck Nature Recovery Pilot.
	3. Are there any plans to extend trust ownership/ management of wensum catchment area beyond Sweet Briar.	NWT's new strategy 'A Wilder Norfolk For All' includes ambitious plans to increase the amount of land that it owns and manages. We will consider management and ownership opportunities both in the Wensum catchment and across the county based on our available resources and assessment of the land's potential to support nature's recovery in Norfolk.
	4. How can land purchase be made more affordable or equitable?	This would require legislation at a national level; we work with the Wildlife Trusts throughout the UK and with other wildlife organisations to influence central government policy. The issue of land purchase is a complex political matter and Norfolk Wildlife Trust does not have the expertise to advise on this specific issue.
7	Can the cutting of grasses etc on roads and lanes be limited to areas at junctions and curves for safety reasons but straight stretches be left uncut to encourage wildlife?	The Trust works with Norfolk County Council to encourage better management practices on road verge management such as those suggested.

8	Recommend better signage to Attenborough walk at Cley - thank you.	Need a bit further clarification about this - is it a lack of clarity from the VC or is the request for signs at the entrance to the walk? We will review this request and assess what is currently in place.
9	What about the NWT taking control of Eaton Marshes through to UEA Broad & Tesco & Harford by the river?	NWT own and manage Harford Bridge Marshes which form part of this network of nature rich sites associated with the river Yare. NWT would welcome future opportunities to work with the City Council and other land owners within the catchment to protect and improve this important wildlife corridor. We are working intensively in the Wensum Valley with our purchase and development of NWT Sweet Briar Marshes and will continue to assess any opportunities that supports nature's recovery in Norfolk
10	Many communities are developing neighbourhood plans. A key policy area is usually that of environmental protection and improvement. This is often in the form of identifying and mapping areas for improvement, such as corridors connecting priority habitat. Is this an opportunity, resources permitting, for NWT to engage local communities, providing expertise and helping mobilise action and potentially gain recruits!	We agree that the development of Neighbourhood Plans is a great opportunity to engage with local people on recovering and reconnecting nature within their parishes. We have just expanded our Nature Recovery Team to enhance our capacity to engage on Neighbourhood Plans and to work with local people on this very issue.
11	<p>Dear President, Chair, CEO</p> <p>It is a great pleasure to see the Trust's actions to recruit and involve local residents in achieving a wilder Norfolk. Last year some excellent reports were given.</p> <p>Might you this year address the plans for Hickling Broad and its village please? All of us have enjoyed the swan flocks grazing this year and other wild</p>	<p>We're starting a major project to refresh the vision for Hickling and work out how the whole estate can deliver environmental, economic and social benefits. It's a really exciting opportunity for us and builds on the community consultation that we did back in 2019. We'll be talking more to the local community about this over the coming months.</p>

	<p>delights. As a villager I am also aware of hopes for integrating the pub, the sailing and the involvement of the social societies of the village in working towards the NWT goals</p> <p>What can we do to help even at this early stage?</p>	
12	<p>What protection do NWT members enjoy against the NWT executive or trustees joining in campaigns - alone or with other bodies - where the support of NWT members is assumed and where the efficacy of NWT's participation in the campaign rests on the targets of the campaign being given to understand that NWT's positioning carries its members' support, even where there has been no specific and explicit effort to confirm that support?</p>	<p>The decision to campaign on various issues is driven by the strategy and vision which we have presented here today. This strategy was agreed by the Council of Trustees in July 2022 and was informed by the results of the 2022 membership survey. The Council is of course elected by members. The Council's role is to ensure that the charity is effectively governed in line with Charity Commission guidelines and best practice. There are specific guidelines around campaigning which we rigorously adhere to. Our positions are informed by evidence and we stick to talking about our areas of expertise which is nature and wildlife. We gather feedback from members on our stance through complaints or compliments. It's worth saying that the vast majority of correspondence recently has been supportive of us raising our voice more robustly to defend nature.</p>
13	<p>It was pleasing to see the Churchyard Conservation Scheme mentioned in the NWT Impact Report 2022-23, page 8, and the team are to be commended for the work they do. It is a shame, therefore, that the NWT website page for the scheme is so out of date, e.g. the 'Latest News' was published in 2018. Whilst "word gets out" about the scheme surely it would be prudent to ensure the website is kept up to date to further encourage take up of the scheme and provide acknowledgement not only for the very important work that this team does but also</p>	<p>We recognise that our current website does not function very well, particularly in terms of us telling stories and promoting the fantastic work our staff and volunteers are doing for nature's recovery. As a result, we are currently working very hard on a brand new website which should be live next Spring. This is taking a considerable amount of resource for our PR &amp; Comms team in particular, which does unfortunately mean that the current website is not up to date in some areas, but we are confident our new website will be much more engaging and user-friendly and will help our supporters learn more about our work and what they can do to help wildlife. Our churchyard conservation scheme is very important to us and we will make sure that this work is celebrated on the new website.</p>

	<p>for the churchyards and associated Parochial Church Council (PCCs) volunteers who work to conserve them. This would also be useful for the general public at large to find information on the participating churches as many people in Norfolk, together with visitors to the area, regularly visit the county's churches. What would it take to update the scheme's webpage(s) and keep them updated without imposing additional tasks on the current team allowing them to carry out the important practical work involved in surveying and advising on churchyards? Increased web exposure for this very important scheme, whilst one of many run by NWT, would, I am sure, be beneficial for all involved and encourage more churches to get involved.</p>	
14	<p>Relating to the payment made to the Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts during the financial year ended 31st March 2023. Do the Trustees considered that the payments represent good value, and exactly what is being 'bought' from the 'contribution to the running costs of the RSWT'?</p>	<p>The contribution to the Wildlife Trusts is driven by our income. So we pay more if we have had a good year financially. Our view is that we get excellent value for the contribution. Let me give a couple of examples:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. It is very clear that we cannot deliver our strategy on a county scale alone. Many of the drivers of loss results from national or international issues. So having a strong policy voice at the national scale is essential. One which represents 920,000 members rather than our 37,000 is much more effective</li> <li>2. We have the amazing benefit of being part of a movement where we are all doing similar things but not competing. We very regularly collaborate and share ideas, which means we dont have to reinvent the wheel 46 times. This has huge benefits for the protection and restoration of wildlife in Norfolk</li> </ol>

15	<p>Before I close, I would just like to say that the Trustees' decision to hold yet another virtual meeting for this year's AGM was, in my opinion, a disservice to the Membership of the Trust.</p>	<p>Looking back over the years, we were rarely attracting more than 40 members (plus Trustees and staff) to the in-person AGM meetings, whereas with the online meetings (our first in 2020 due to Covid, and last year – 2022) we have managed to get over 80 members attending, and our voting numbers have increased from 150 pre-covid to over 750 this year. I do understand your concern about members getting the opportunity to meet, and please be assured that this has been discussed internally We are keen to rectify this and are looking at the possibility of an annual members day/event for next year.</p>
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<b>Live Questions &amp; Answers</b>	
	<p>Any plans to use beavers as a means of enhancing and creating wetland systems along our rivers?</p> <p>So at the moment, we've got no plans in place to introduce European beavers primarily, because up until now and at the moment the releases are not what you call a true release, they're released into enclosures. So we have taken the decision that, having enclosures on the type of land that we own and manage wouldn't be appropriate. But we are watching very carefully the developments and the progression of the natural England discussions on open release licensing and it's certainly something to be releasing a keystone species such as Europe, but is definitely something we should aspire to. But clearly in Norfolk with landscapes which are drained such as the Broads, we need to take really careful assessment and large scale consultation if ever we were, going to do something like that. But clearly it's something that's going to improve the ecology which the ecosystem engineers do is something that certainly aspire to in the future.</p>

I respect your decision to be remarkably apolitical. However, I'm wondering how you work if you can with local Mps, most of whom, as we know, are on the right wing of the Tory party, for whom the environment is a low priority.

We will work with anyone and everyone who's elected by the public. We recognise that people have different views. We've met with probably half of the Norfolk Mps in the last couple of years. You know, some of them are interested and some of them are less interested, but we have to respect that, and I suppose I'd say nothing lasts forever. You know the the politics has a way of being cyclical. We have elections next year, and I think what we're really focused on is making sure we're clear about what we'd like politicians to do whatever party they're in and making sure we're advocating as hard as possible for that and that could be equally with Mps. We go back to my last 3 days we had a fantastic series of conversations around, working with local counselors and trying to, change politics from the grass roots more than with mps, because you recognise that the politics of the moment is not the most friendly it's been. We can't change that, but we can make sure again that we raise our voice in a firm but respectful way to those representatives. So we are going to continue to work with whoever we have to be sanguine about the fact that we've got who we've got and we will try as hard as we possibly can to make sure they understand our views and I think it's the important thing to remember.