



We care for the Chilterns

## **2023 DRAFT Minutes of the Annual General Meeting**

**Of**

### **The Chiltern Society**

A company limited by guarantee and registered in England and Wales, no. 4138448,  
also a registered charity, no. 1085163,  
held on 21 October 2023 at the White Hill Centre.

**Present:** Michael Rush, President; Simon Kearey, Chairman and Treasurer, Helen Griffiths, General Secretary; members of the Executive Council; Tom Beeston, Chief Officer, and approximately 70 members of the Society.

Earl Howe, Patron, addressed the assembled members of the Society before the formal start to pay tribute to the retiring President, Michael Rush. Earl Howe expressed his gratitude for Michael's work over many years. Michael Rush thanked him for his words and stated that he regarded that his own biggest achievement at the Society was to convince Earl Howe to become the Society's Patron. Earl Howe also extended his thanks to Michael Rush's wife, Linda for all her support. Earl Howe expressed his regret that he could not stay for the AGM and left.

#### **1. Chairman's welcome**

The Chairman, Simon Kearey, opened the business of the AGM and welcomed all members to the annual meeting of the Society. Simon Kearey ran through the agenda of the meeting and highlighted the forum to take place in the afternoon on Nature Recovery.

#### **2. General Secretary's housekeeping**

Helen Griffiths gave a brief update on general housekeeping arrangements.

#### **3. Quorum and apologies for absence**

Helen Griffiths advised the meeting that apologies had been received from a number of members who were unable to attend. Helen Griffiths further confirmed that a quorum of at least 20 members was present and that accordingly the Annual General Meeting could proceed to business.

#### **4. Approval of the Minutes of Annual General Meeting held 14 October 2022**

The draft minutes had been posted on the Society's website for all members and copies were available at the meeting. The minutes were approved by the members by a show of hands. There were no matters arising from the minutes.

## **5. Chairman's Annual Review 2022/23**

The Chairman, Simon Kearey presented his annual review of the activities of the Society for the year 2022/2023. Simon Kearey raised the importance of fundraising and considered the impacts of investments, memberships, legacies, trading, project grants and trusts. Tom Beeston shared that the Society had been successful in obtaining Heritage Lottery funding for the Society's Wildbelt project. Simon Kearey highlighted the number of volunteers supporting the Society and their range of work across conservation on sites, planning and HS2, keeping paths open, central support and other key areas. In talking of the work of the Access and Rights of Way Group, Simon Kearey noted the partnerships in relation to the Ridgeway and the Misborne Greenway and the role of the Group leaders linking with landowners and relevant councils. Tom Beeston commented on Conservation highlights at Northend Common, Penn Jubilee Wood, and on the Smarter Water Catchment project. Simon Kearey highlighted the hours of work put in by volunteers on Planning and on HS2. Simon Kearey reviewed the activities of Heritage and Culture highlighting the success of the Heritage Festival and the work of volunteers at Lacey Green Windmill and Ewelme. Simon Kearey considered the activities and changes at the Society since he became Chair five years ago and posed questions for the members to consider as the Society looks at what it will do next.

## **6. Treasurer's Report and Presentation of Accounts**

Simon Kearey expressed his gratitude for the work done by Brian McGowan, the prior Treasurer, such that he inherited finances that were structured and straightforward. Simon Kearey presented the highlights for the financial year 2022/2023 to the meeting. He advised that the overall income of the Society for the year was £883K, with a net deficit of £29K (against a budget deficit of £65K). Simon Kearey noted that legacies were down. He explained that the increase in overall costs reflected higher major projects costs for which the Society was receiving funding (Wildbelt, Green Recovery, Northend, Smarter Water Catchment). Overall there had been good control of operating costs. Simon Kearey reviewed the Balance Sheet noting that the net assets are £1.084m with the reduction since the prior year mostly due to depreciation on office equipment, and Ewelme. He noted that in relation to investments, these will be revalued as at the year end and that the numbers presented are currently unaudited, and that the Society will continue to review higher interest opportunities. In relation to the Profit and Loss for the financial year 2022/2023 Simon Kearey noted that the decline in membership had been partially offset by a small increase in membership fees, charitable activities included project income, and that investment income had increased to £17.3K.

## **7. Appointment of Reporting Accountant**

Simon Kearey noted that Azets continue to do a good job for the Society, alongside the Society's bookkeeper Nutshell Accounts. Azets was proposed as reporting accountant for the year and the members approved the reappointment by a show of hands.

## **8. Election of Officers and Trustees**

Simon Kearey tabled for election the new Trustees, Trustees seeking a second term, and Officers, all who had been duly nominated and seconded by members. The following elections were then approved by the members at the meeting by a show of hands:

New Trustee	Mark Gardiner
New Trustee	Alex Moriarty
New Trustee	Robin Storey
New Trustee	Andrew Wilson

Trustee for re-election	Luke Jefferys
Trustee for re-election	Cat Moncrieff

Chairman	Simon Kearey
Vice Chairman	David Harris
Vice Chairman	Luke Jefferys
Treasurer	Simon Kearey
General Secretary	Helen Griffiths

Simon Kearey expressed his thanks to Lisbet Sherlock and Harriet Bennett for their respective work on fundraising and conservation.

## **9. Open forum for members' questions**

Simon Kearey opened the floor for questions and discussions from the members. Topics raised included:

Inviting John Craven to help with fundraising for the sails for Lacey Green Windmill

What has been done in terms of replacing Colin Blundell in Planning?

What will happen in terms of mitigation by HS2 once works are finished, and what is the Society's response for the ongoing maintenance of new planting by HS2?

With planning and other issues is the Society networking into village societies as well as parish councils?

Overgrown signage for the White Hill Centre.

Can the Society take drone images over the Society's sites where work is being done?

In relation to diversity, is there merit to collaborate with the NHS and their pre-retirement planning for their staff?

## **10. President – retiring , and consultation for new**

Simon Kearey announced that Michael Rush was now standing down as President and outlined the process for the selection and appointment of a new President. The first stage of this is to consult with members on a future President with election taking place at a later point by the Executive Council of the Society. David Harris has expressed an interest in the role. Simon Kearey stated that he considered it would be fitting for David Harris to take on the role continuing to support the Society and Simon Kearey was accordingly consulting with members at the meeting. No objections were raised and the matter will therefore be taken to the next stage.

Simon Kearey expressed his huge thanks for Michael and Linda Rush for all the work they had done for the Society over the years. Simon Kearey then shared photos and reflections on the life and many works of Michael Rush.

#### **11. Address by the retiring President**

The retiring President, Michael Rush expressed that he was delighted to be at the meeting after three decades of being Chairman, and more latterly President, which he considered an honour that he has relished. He captivated the members present with his stories of the different organisation he became Chairman of in 1997 and reflected on the memorable things achieved. These included enabling the Woodland Trust to buy the 400 acres of Penn Wood, fundraising £125K to buy Ewelme, and opening the Chiltern Way as a millennium project. He thanked his wife, Linda Rush for her support.

#### **12. End of formal proceedings**

Simon Kearey declared the end of the formal proceedings and advised that it would be followed after lunch with a forum on Nature Recovery. The formal meeting was accordingly closed.

Helen Griffiths  
General Secretary  
October 2023