



JOHN
MUIR
TRUST

John Muir Trust

Annual General Meeting 2025

Members are cordially invited to attend the Forty-second Annual General Meeting at 6.30pm on Monday 15 September online. Our online AGM provider will be in touch with you to let you know how to join the meeting. Apologies can be sent to membership@johnmuirtrust.org

Agenda

1. Welcome and apologies
2. Minute of the Forty-first Annual General Meeting [vote]
3. Matters arising from the Minutes
4. Chair's report
5. Financial report and annual accounts for the year ended 31 December 2024
6. Reappointment of auditors WBG (Audit) Limited [vote]
7. Election of Trustees
8. Special Resolution: To adopt the revised version of the 2021 Articles of Association (as shared with all Members on the John Muir Trust website at johnmuirtrust.org/governance-update) [vote]

John Muir Trust Annual General Meeting 2024 Draft Minutes

Forty-first Annual General Meeting
held online on 14 September 2024

1. Welcome and apologies

Jane Smallman, Chair, welcomed approximately 150 Members, Trustees and staff to the meeting.

Apologies had been received from: Gordon Dilworth, Mike Crompton, Stella King, David Kyles, Glenys Archer, Steve Green, Caroline Bottoms, Richard Bridges, Ian Pie and Steven Young.

2. Minutes of the Fortieth Annual General Meeting

The minutes of the Fortieth Annual General Meeting, held on 4 November 2023 were approved following a vote.

3. Matters arising from the Minutes

There were none.

4. Chair's report

Prior to the AGM the Chair reported on two Lessons Learned Reports that had been commissioned by the Trust in early 2024. The first of these was an independent external review of the lessons learned into three key aspects of the CEO suspension from 14 June 2023 until 31 October 2023. These were the decision to suspend, the investigation process, and how to avoid in future.

She noted that with hindsight there is a question mark around whether it was appropriate to suspend the CEO. The Trust has apologised to the CEO for the suspension, its impact on him

personally, and the impact on the Trust. The summary report from this review is available on the Trust's website.

The second Lessons Learned Review was into the circumstances that lead to the financial crisis was reported on by Carol White prior to the AGM. A copy of this report is available on Trust's website.

At the 2023 AGM, the Chair committed to reviewing the format of the AGM, and opportunities for Members to meet in person. The Board decided for reasons of inclusivity and cost to remain online for the 2024 AGM. The Trust has also organised a number of in person Member events for Autumn 2024, which Members are encouraged to attend. The format of the AGM will remain under review and the Trust will continue to plan other opportunities for Members to meet in person.

The Chair then reported on progress in 2023 and gave a forward look to 2024.

Following a Board decision, the Trust acquired the 18-hectare site at Kylesku in January 2023. The site forms a key part of the Trust's conservation and engagement strategy and includes ten lodges, the holiday let business, a residential property and several building plots.

In early 2024, the Trust began the Kylesku Futures project in consultation with the local community. Initial discussions had already taken place with key local organisations, with further scoping studies planned for late 2024.

The Chair advised that the Trust was now successfully operating the existing holiday lodge business through the Trading Company and generating much needed income. Income generated by the business during 2023 was approximately £120,000.

In September 2023, the Trust took on interim management of the John Muir Way on a trial basis. Previously the Trust had been one of the partner organisations with operations being run by the Green Action Trust. The interim management period will be reviewed in 2025.

In October 2023 the Trust decided against renewing the five-year stewardship of Glenridding Common in the Lake District. We declined to tender for a new lease as the terms were incompatible with the Trust's charitable objectives. The Trust has retained its involvement in the Lake District through working with partners above Thirlmere Reservoir.

2023 marked the 40th anniversary of the Trust, which was commemorated by a special anniversary Journal publication, an exhibition at the Wild Space Visitor Centre, and a Creative Freedom project. In August, partners and friends of the Trust were invited to a celebration reception with an introduction by John Swinney MSP and a viewing of the Trust's Clear on Deer film.

The Trust's recommendation to remove the closed season for male deer was approved by the Scottish Parliament and came into effect in October 2023. The increased deer culls were supported by out

of season and night shooting authorisations from Nature Scot. The Chair reported that this approach to deer management was showing early signs of success with regeneration of aspen, willow, alder, holly and birch evident at Knoydart and Quinag. The Trust will continue this approach to deer management in 2024.

The Reimagining Strathaird project experienced slower progress due to the Trust's financial challenges. Through the hard work of staff, the Trust achieved key milestones that included a detailed survey of the Kirk to facilitate the removal of adjoining agricultural buildings, which were subsequently removed. Additionally, in February 2023, a survey was undertaken to establish the scale of invasive non-native species across Strathaird. This was a significant ecological challenge and further work will be needed before any decisions can be made in terms of eradication, management or acceptance of any of those species.

The Trust also engaged in discussions with the communities on supporting their requirements for affordable housing at Strathaird and Elgol and, subject to funding, the Trust will be progressing feasibility to establish Strathaird's Hub which would connect key locations on the peninsula and promote slow tourism through interpretation of the landscape's history.

The Trust continued to aspire to demonstrate exemplary land management on each of its properties. At Schiehallion, the Seed to Tree project has involved local primary schools in restoring woodland. At Glenlude, volunteers supported by Trust staff planted 5,500 native broadleaf trees and shrubs.

Staff worked tirelessly to maintain natural habitats, and this included removing five tonnes of plastic waste from the shorelines of Skye and 700 kg of litter from Ben Nevis.

During 2023 the Trust saw good progress on its proposed Carbon Emissions Land Tax (CELT), which is designed to encourage Scotland's largest landowners to manage their land better for wild places through processes such as peatland and woodland restoration. Our petition on CELT achieved over 2,500 signatures and was backed by organisations representing over one million people. In December 2023, the proposal was endorsed by the Scottish Government in their draft budget and in April 2024, the Scottish Government announced that a public consultation would be held.

The Trust's policy team reviewed over 300 public planning applications and, working with partner organisations, opposed those that would damage wild places.

In 2023, the Trust progressed the Charterhouse property management project working with the Historic Coventry Trust to allow urban communities to connect with and learn about a wild place that is local to them. The Trust hosted a range of events, and the Board will be reviewing a proposal on the future development and management of the site in 2024.

The Chair concluded by looking forward to 2024, which is a year of transition. The Trust's priority in 2024 is to ensure financial stability whilst refocusing our strategy. In April 2024 the Board approved 11 strategic objectives designed to provide alignment with the Trust's charitable purpose - to conserve and protect wild places for the benefit of present and future generations.

5. Financial report and annual accounts for the year end 31 December 2023

Trustee and Convenor of the Finance Committee, Jim Gibson, thanked the Finance Team for preparing the accounts.

Jim explained that there had been a drop in income of about £0.8m from £3.5m in 2022 to £2.7m in 2023 which correlated to a decrease in Legacy income of £924k. Membership income increased by £18k compared to 2022. Income from membership subscriptions was about 13% of the Trust's total income

income and Jim thanked Members for their continued support. Legacy income in 2022 had been extraordinarily generous at £1.8m but had decreased in 2023 to just under £940k. He noted that legacy income is unpredictable and that the Trust was taking action to reduce its dependency on legacy income by increasing income from other sources.

The CFO provided information on expenditure. She advised that the actual Group expenditure rose from £3.7m in 2022 to £4.8m in 2023. The two main reasons for this were the increase in staff numbers and projects designed to improve the Trust's systems and processes.

The system implementation project was initiated to move the Trust from legacy systems to more modern ways of working, and to promote increased efficiency and synergies across the organisation. The project was halted in 2024 due to the Trust's financial position, meaning that two systems were implemented instead of the four originally planned. Staff costs rose by £334k in 2023 and were driven partly by recruitment to meet strategic goals as agreed by the Board, and a levelling up exercise to ensure that staff were paid in line with the charity sector.

Jim advised that during 2023 reserves were used to fund an in-year deficit. The Trust had £1.6m in restricted funds, £3.6m in heritage properties, £3.1m in designated funds and £0.7 m in unrestricted funds, leaving a total of £9.0m Total Charity Funds, compared to the £10.8m at the end of 2022.

[Post AGM note: At the 2024 AGM, the Total Charity Funds were stated as £9.1m, this has been corrected to £9.0m in the minutes].

6. Membership subscriptions. Special Resolution: To increase membership subscription rates to the new rates proposed in the Special Resolution.

Members voted in favour of increasing the John Muir Trust membership fees in 2025.

7. Re-Appointment of auditors WBG (Audit) Limited

Following an audit tender process in Autumn 2024, Jim Gibson proposed the re-appointment of auditors WBG (Audit) Limited. Members voted to approve this re-appointment.

8. Election of Trustees

The Chair advised that there were nine valid nominations received for five vacancies and following the election process, Alison Russell, Clare Jefferis, Damian Aubrey, Denis Mollison and David Farquhar had been elected as Trustees. In addition, two Trustees, Eelco de Jong and David McKay, were co-opted on a skills basis.

The Chair welcomed the new and returning Trustees. She also thanked Jim Gibson, who was demitting office, for his diligent service to the Trust for the last six years and wished him well for the future.

9. Other relevant business

Jane Smallman expressed the gratitude of the Trust to its Members, volunteers, donors, partners, fundraisers, friends and supporters, and closed the meeting.