



## Ouse & Adur Rivers Trust

### Minutes of the Annual General Meeting

Held on 22 September 2021

Via videoconference, at 19.00

Due to Covid-19 and as for the 2019/2020 AGM, this one was held online.

#### 1. Welcome.

The Chairman, Hew Prendergast, welcomed members and staff and thanked them for their virtual attendance. At least 26 members were confirmed as present, thereby making the meeting quorate.

#### 2. Apologies for absence

These were received from Robin Akers, Philip Evans, Nicola Fryatt, Juliet Merrifield, Mark Orchin and Sally Wadsworth.

#### 3. Chairman's Report

The report had been circulated beforehand but, on behalf of Trustees, appreciation was emphasised of the superb efforts of staff throughout the year and of the dedication over many years of retiring Trustee John Whiting.

#### 4. Finance Report

Simon Turner presented the 2020/2021 accounts which, for the first time, comply with the April-April format rather than calendar year as had been used up to December 2018. There was a transitional accounting year to cover the period 1 January 2019 to 31 March 2020. These annual accounts are independently examined by a registered member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants.

During the year income of £332,443 (2019/2020, £800,925) exceeded expenditure of £330,110 (£735,233) by £2,333 (£65,592). The main driver of difference between the accounting years was the 2019/2020 income and cost related to capital works during development of the EPIC site.

Overall OART is in a good state financially with total funds (as of 31 March 2021) of £193,579 (£191,246), £127,014 of which are unrestricted funds (essentially those that OART can choose to use in order to pursue its aims) and £66,565 are restricted funds (those designated to particular projects).

By a show of hands on screen members approved adoption of the accounts.

#### 5. Appointment and election of Trustees

John Whiting retired by rotation and was not seeking re-election. Members were asked to confirm that James Ebdon and Sam St Pierre, due to retire by rotation, be re-appointed as Trustees. Proposals and seconding for them both were made, respectively, by Clive Fetter and Simon Turner, and Neil Pringle and Mike Valpy. Due to time constraints imposed by OART's Articles of Association, the interest of one member

in becoming a Trustee, filling the vacancy of John Whiting, will be processed during the year for formal approval by the membership at the 2022 AGM.

## **6. Presentation on OART's work in 2020/2021**

Pete King (Director) opened by announcing the award of the Tony Barnard Shield (presented each year to a person or group who has given outstanding support to OART) to David Elder, a student at the University of Brighton who, after a three month work placement with OART, has for 13 months been doing extensive water quality testing at Barcombe and the EPIC site. On behalf of staff Pete thanked David profusely for his contribution.

He then outlined the many non-project activities with which OART has been involved, for example with chairing the Adur & Ouse Catchment Partnership, being consulted on developments, and contributing to various panels. Fund-raising is a continuing challenge which he hopes will expand in sources such as the commercial sector. He also noted that OART's work has been nominated for three awards. One of these is for the EPIC project at Sompting whose creation of a new channel for the Broadwater Brook, 800m of which was previously in a pipe, has led to a huge increase in wildlife and improvement in water quality. The experience gained during the project, plus its success, may lead to more Heritage Fund support elsewhere.

Alistair Whitby (Project Officer) described the construction of three ponds at the EPIC site, the planting of 2.2 km of hedges, three 'bioblitzes' (recording as many species as possible in a day – the grand total is now 550) and four plastic litter campaigns. There have also been numerous bird identification and photography courses, archaeological digs and the creation of green oak sculptures round the site – all on show at the public opening on 4 September.

Also (mainly) at the EPIC site Linda Kerrison (Volunteer and Engagement Officer) has been running and teaching ecological surveys for volunteers on aquatic invertebrates, bats and reptiles, and promoting habitat creation in urban settings. Four local schools have been closely involved with the site which now also has 40 River Rangers undertaking monthly tasks.

Rachel Paget (Senior Project Officer) described the continuing Slaugham to Ardingly Restoration project on the Upper Ouse which covers activities such as the removal of Invasive Non-native Species (INNS) like Himalayan Balsam, the easing of fish passage and reducing the input of sediment. Introducing Natural Flood Management (NFM) measures was the focus of work in the Ringmer, Wivelesfield and Lewes area while habitat enhancements took place on the Herring and Tanyard Streams.

Tara Dawson (Natural Flood Management Project Officer [River Adur]) also covered NFM with research on its potential for protecting high risk flood areas on the lower Adur, for example by increasing water infiltration into the soil, slowing river flow and decreasing surface water flow. Much of her time has been spent on meeting local communities, doing press releases and seeking best practice via desk-stop study.

Pete King finished the presentations with some of the many other projects already in hand or with the possibility of being so, such as restoration work on the Cockshut Stream on the north edge of Lewes Brooks and the Herring Stream. Partnerships with other organisations are strengthening such as with Lewes District Council, and there are many ideas for seeking funds to develop citizen science projects (for example OART's longstanding sea trout watch).

## **Close**

The proceedings were brought to a close at 20.15, the Chairman thanking those giving the presentations and also thanking members for their support and attendance.