



**Durham**  
**Wildlife Trust**  
From Tees to Tyne

# Annual General Meeting Pack 2025



# Durham Wildlife Trust Annual General Meeting

## 27th October 2025 at 6pm

Information of the agenda is provided below. Members are encouraged to submit any questions they may have prior to the meeting so that full responses can be provided and shared at the meeting. There will also be the opportunity to submit questions during the meeting.

1. Apologies for absence – any apologies received will be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.
2. Minutes\* of the 2024 AGM
3. Adoption of Annual Report and Consolidated Accounts\* – a presentation will be provided by Clare Butcher, Durham Wildlife Trust Treasurer. Members will be asked to vote on a resolution to adopt the Annual Report and Consolidated Accounts.
4. Chair's remarks – a presentation will be provided by Sarah Lister, Durham Wildlife Trust Chair.
5. Election of members to the Board  
Sarah Lister, Trustee and current Chair of the Board, will be standing down at the AGM after serving as Chair for six years, the maximum time permitted under the Trust's Articles of Association.

The members on the following pages are seeking election as Trustees. Each candidate will briefly present their biography and reasons for seeking election to the Membership. Members will be asked to vote on a resolution approving the election of each candidate. There are sufficient places available on the Board for all candidates to be elected if approved by the membership. All candidates have participated in a selection process to assess their suitability and eligibility and are recommended to the membership by the Durham Wildlife Trust Board.

6. Confirmation of auditors - Members will be asked to vote on a resolution to confirm Robson Laidler Accountants Limited as the Trust's auditors for 2025- 26.

\* see separate document

Following the close of the formal AGM Andrew Wadds, Durham Wildlife Trust's Reserves Manager, will provide an update on the ongoing restoration and management of Cuthbert's Moor. Trust Director, Jim Cokill, will also provide an update on other activity across the Trust.



# Prospective Trustees



## Steve Bhowmick

As a recently retired environmental professional with a career spanning forty years, I am passionate about becoming a trustee in order to contribute to the leadership of the Trust's vital work in promoting local environmental action.

I share the Trust's values in seeing participation and partnership as essential tools for building a common purpose that enables the best results on the ground. As an advocate of being stronger together, I am experienced in building effective relationships and wish to extend this with others like other trusts and stakeholders e.g. the NE Combined Authority.

The Trust's commitment towards sharing and learning is vital to achieving a lasting legacy for nature. I can bring a commitment to promoting advocacy, training and support across all sectors, exemplified through my role in the development of Durham City Green Corridor, coastal regeneration work including the current Coastal Grasslands Reconnected project, and securing wider engagement in the North East Community Forest.

Success is often realised through community participation being enjoyable and rewarding, an approach that I have taken through my responsibility for the County Durham Environment Awards; now recognised as being an ideal vehicle for the celebration of environmental community activity.

Having skills as an experienced lead in managing physical and financial resources, I adopt a life-course approach to achieve sustainable, long term outcomes, as exemplified through being a leading representative in successful legacy projects like the Land of Oak and Iron partnership.

I am also able to bring expertise to strengthen an environmentally led approach being adopted by the Trust through its commitment to the IiE auditing process, for which I have been the council's successful lead co-ordinator for 4 years.

Becoming a trustee would present me with an ideal opportunity to bring forward everything I believe in, focussed on the need to act now to safeguard our precious natural environment. It would be an honour and a privilege if I was fortunate to be selected, as I have both the commitment and ability to contribute and strengthen the valuable work of this exemplar local organisation in whatever way I can.





## Clare Butcher

Since deciding to retire in spring 2024 I kept an eye of the ICAEW Volunteer website for a role to which I would like to give my time.

The Durham Wildlife Trust position arose and I was immediately attracted. I have been a member for possibly 20 years, my favourite places to visit being Hawthorn Dene and Hannah's Meadow. Having had a senior finance role in a major charity I could see that my skills and experience matched the criteria for the role of Treasurer.

Since taking on the role of co-opted Treasurer I have become more attached to the Trust and the causes it represents. E.g. I attended the Volunteers Christmas Event and very much enjoyed the company of like-minded people.

Durham Wildlife Trust is fortunate to have a very able Head of Finance and also to enjoy a strong financial position. This must be maintained and used well in accordance with the charity's objectives. I feel I have contributed positively already in the following ways:

- 🦋 Spent time with the Head of Finance to learn more about how the finances are run. At that meeting it came to light that quarterly and not monthly management accounts are prepared. As a result I have asked more questions about monthly reconciliations of the restricted funds.
- 🦋 Met the Head of Finance before each FAR to go through the papers in detail and understand what is needed from each meeting.
- 🦋 Received positive feedback as Chair of FAR.
- 🦋 Chaired a FAR sub group to determine the pay award for senior Durham Wildlife Trust staff.
- 🦋 Assisted the Head of Finance in drawing up an investment policy in anticipation of receiving high value funds under BNG.
- 🦋 Attended an investments webinar by Brewin Dolphin to maintain and update my own knowledge. I noted a possible area to work on being to develop further the Trust's reserves strategy.
- 🦋 I have made sure that FAR specifically notes how bequests are spent so that we can follow through with the family, publicise the joy of making a bequest and, hopefully, encourage more gifts.
- 🦋 I am due to attend the final audit meeting on 4<sup>th</sup> August.





## Michael Coates

As a former Trustee of Durham Wildlife Trust for eight years, I am proud to have played a meaningful role in advancing the Trust's mission. During my tenure, I not only contributed consistently to strategic goals but also designed the very skills matrix I recently completed—demonstrating both my commitment and my effectiveness as a Trustee and ambassador for the Trust.

Even after stepping down, my dedication to Durham Wildlife Trust has remained unwavering. Over the past year, I have continued to volunteer actively, supporting marketing initiatives and leading public engagement events that bring our local wildlife to life for the community.

In the last 12 months alone, I have:

- ✎ Authored a two-page feature for the current issue of the Durham Wildlife Trust magazine.
- ✎ Supported three public events at Elemore Park as part of the Links with Nature programme (Anne and Pip can confirm).
- ✎ Led three dragonfly walks and talks at Durham Wildlife Trust sites, sharing my passion and knowledge with attendees.

Beyond Durham Wildlife Trust, I have delivered a lecture at Newcastle University on regional dragonflies—available on the NHSN YouTube channel: [The Ups and Downs of Dragonfly Life in the North East](#). I've also led guided walks for NHSN at reserves north of the Tyne and spoken at events hosted by various local nature groups.

As County Recorder for dragonflies (VC66 and VC67), I verify thousands of records submitted via iRecord and iNaturalist. I maintain regular contact with ecologists from Durham and South Tyneside County Councils and collaborate closely with the Environmental Records Information Centre for the North East (ERIC).

I am eager to return as a Trustee—not only to contribute to the Trust's continued success but also to bring valuable continuity and institutional memory to the board. More importantly, I am driven by a deep passion for protecting and enhancing biodiversity in the North East. I want to help ensure that our region thrives with a rich network of wildlife sites and that the Trust remains a powerful voice in challenging threats to our local and national environment.





## Stephen Willis

I am incredibly excited at the opportunity to become a Trustee for Durham Wildlife Trust. As a passionate and dedicated ecologist and naturalist who has spent all my life (bar a dalliance with Lancaster University for an Ecology BSc, and a year working with RSPB) living in County Durham, I can think of no better way of giving back to the region, and of supporting its biodiversity, than to support Durham Wildlife Trust in this way.

I am already, since 2024, a Conservation Advisory Group member for Durham Wildlife Trust. I am also involved in numerous projects with the Wildlife Trust, including having acted as a Trustee on the recently concluded, and highly successful, Discover Brightwater project. I am currently working with Durham Wildlife Trust on monitoring some of its new sites for avian biodiversity (e.g. Cuthbert's Moor, Bishop's Feb, Morden Carrs, Ricknall Carrs). I am also hugely excited to be involved with the Great North Fen initiative, and will be collecting plants and seeds for the first stages of re-establishing the wider wetland plant communities of its planned habitats.

My background is as an ecologist, having studied the Teesdale Flora of the North Pennines for an MSc, and the spread of alien species along Durham river catchments for my PhD. I have worked at Durham University since 1996 as a Research Assistant, PDRA, Lecturer, Senior Lecturer, Reader and, since 2017, as a Professor of Ecology and Conservation Biology (now a Band 3 Professor; the top tier of academic achievement). I have been the Director of Research and Deputy Head of Department in the Biosciences Department for the last 5 years.

I was brought up alongside the River Skerne, and lived through some of the ecologically depleted periods of County Durham's history, which makes the recent recoveries of nature, and the future opportunities, all the more exciting.

I bring to Durham Wildlife Trust much experience of prior trustee and management roles along with a wealth of ecological and conservation experience. I have published around 130 research papers on ecological topics, which have been cited over 12,000 times.

