

BACKWELL ENVIRONMENT TRUST
17th Annual General Meeting Saturday, November 13th 2021
Backwell Parish Hall 2.00pm

Present:

Roy Ackrill, Diana Bramall, Ian Chambers, Nicola Church, Hugh Dale, Jill Dale, Jennifer Dyer, Ken Edis, Jane Elliot, Christopher Elliot, Cheryl Flynn, Olwen Gillespie, Dave Gray, Gill Gray, Jenny Greenslade, Rosemary Lawson, Chris McDonald, Helen McDonald, Jo Mattos, Tony Medland, Christine Ogborne, Elma Porter, Trevor Riddle, Jas Smallbone, Ted Smallbone, Andy Smith, Anne-Marie Smith, Peter Speight, Thelma Trendell, Colin Welch, Hilary West, Denis Wilmott, Janet Wilmott.

Apologies from: Sue and Richard Ivens, John Phillips (103!).

Proceedings began with Peter Speight introducing himself and welcoming all members present. He then stated that the 2019 Minutes had been reviewed by the Trustees and have been online since the last AGM. We have received no comments and I am happy to confirm that they are a correct record of the 2019 proceedings.

Last year BET did not hold an AGM during lockdown and the trustees elected to publish an annual report to members instead with an update on activities and a summary of accounts. This doesn't need approval but I would just like to record that the report was emailed to members and has been available on the website for 12 months and we received no comments.

Chairman's Report

The past 18 months have been challenging and stressful for everyone but we know that the beautiful BET reserves are enjoyed by so many people who visit them regularly for exercise, fresh air and to connect with nature.

We have received many messages of support and thanks for the work that our amazing volunteers do to manage the woods and meadows. The reserves were described recently by one new member as glorious! During lockdown we had to suspend our regular volunteer group work sessions but individuals continued to work alone on essential tasks. As lockdown eased our volunteers restarted work tackling new projects eagerly, as Ian will describe in his woodland report.

It has been sad to see how fast ash dieback disease has affected our woods – and those across the country. Following a survey in the summer by a highly experienced tree consultant we were faced with having to fell a large number of trees which were assessed as posing an unacceptably high level of risk to the public. Both BET reserves have public rights of way along their length, as well as the road, which cannot simply be closed.

The trustees have an obligation to do what is reasonable to keep the woods safe for visitors. We cannot imagine how the trustees and BET members would feel if someone was seriously injured by a falling tree that we had been advised posed a significant danger and we had taken no action.

We therefore had to employ a specialist contractor and equipment to tackle the highest risk trees along the road and opposite houses. The initial felling may have seemed brutal but we believe it was undertaken as carefully as possible, taking into account the danger of working with large diseased trees. With increased light to the woodland floor we expect regeneration to be swift and we will continue with restocking and planting new trees on the reserves.

There are large numbers of trees close to paths which have also been marked as they are affected by the disease and are highly likely to die and collapse. We will keep a watch on these in the hope that some may survive and only fell them if necessary.

Unfortunately we expect that many more trees will need to be felled at considerable cost. We are extremely grateful for the support and generous donations we have received from our members which will help towards this expense. We are also pleased to report that a sizeable grant of £35,000 from the Tarmac Landfill Communities Fund covered most of the cost of the recent roadside tree felling.

Looking forward to the next few years we expect that managing diseased ash trees and other ageing species will have a temporary impact on the appearance of the reserves. However, we hope that members will understand that we are doing our best to tackle a difficult challenge and that the reserves will continue to be a wonderful amenity and haven for a tremendous variety of wildlife.

Thank you all for your ongoing support and for being here today.

Any general questions? You will be hearing more detail on the finances and woodland activities in the next reports.

Treasurer's Report and Accounts

As I am sure you will all agree, it has been an extraordinary year. This is reflected in the Accounts being dominated by Ash Die back and the overwhelming response to our Appeal. Unfortunately, because of the huge and ongoing costs we felt it necessary to raise our Membership fees for the first time since BET was formed 17 years ago.

As to the actual accounts: you will note that we have included three accounting years and as 2019/20 was truncated by lockdown and the membership was suspended, the only meaningful comparison is with 2018/19. Membership receipts were up from £920 to £950 and donations up from £664.85 to a staggering £26,540. All the figures in the 20/21 accounts accentuate the outstanding generosity of the members, indeed we received over 20 donations of £100 or more and two donations over £1000. One of these was from local member Ken Edis who also donated an additional £20,000. Therefore, Total Receipts are up from 1,608.88 to £28,456.19.

Total Payments were up from £1,100.15 to £5,694.70 this year, again because of the die back, as necessary surveys and tree work took place. The Grant column of £782.40 was the initial claim made against the Tarmac £20k grant. This was for one day of tree felling in March plus the purchase of tools relevant to the tree work. Website and printing costs are relatively constant, insurance is static, indeed the insurance company made no charge for 19/20. The hire of this Hall for the AGM shows as zero as the cost was refunded, again because of lockdown

You will see we have an additional column in the accounts to accommodate Restricted Funds. Because of the large donations and grants that are now involved we have been advised that this would be best accounting practice for donations of £1000 and over. A restricted fund is a reserve account that contains money that can only be used for specific purposes – in our case, Ash Die Back. It provides reassurance to donors that their contributions are used in a manner they have chosen. It could happen that any money not used would sit dormant in this account for years. Although, in our case this money will almost certainly be consumed as more and more trees succumb.

Looking forward we are in the process of applying for Telephone and subsequently Internet/mobile banking. This will hopefully speed up transactions and communications with the bank which at this time are woefully inadequate, exacerbated by the Bank's move to Portishead. Also PayPal is another option we are exploring.

Peter asked if there were any questions and Tony Medland congratulated him on getting the grants but queried the £35,000 figure. Peter explained that most of the grant was paid to us after the accounting year end. But we have subsequently paid out £37,660. Added to the Reserves of £10,000 we have £25,000 earmarked for ongoing tree work. This would probably last 1-2 years but then we might have to think about fund-raising again. He then went on to explain that as we are now in the big league for income we would have to submit more detailed accounts to The Charity Commission.

Colin Welch then asked if BET would have to maintain this level of spending. Peter said that most of the dangerous trees had been felled and that others would be assessed on a year by year basis, thereby spreading the financial load. It was all made much more complicated by the linear shape of the reserves and the fact that, as it contains so many public rights of way, we cannot close off any of these sections of the woods.

The accounts were then proposed by Tony Medland and seconded by Trevor Riddle. A vote was taken and passed unanimously.

Secretary's Report

I would just like to say a few words now about our membership and trustee situation.

Membership numbers have increased this year from 238 in 2019 to 260. We do give a grace period of two years before removing members details from the database.

As for the Trustee situation; the number of Trustees for the coming year has remained the same at five, albeit with one changeover. Viv French has stepped down as Trustee and Treasurer and Andy Smith has now been elected to take over these roles.

Viv has been in post for 18 months and in that time has made a number of positive changes. She has made major improvements to the accounting system and instigated the independent examination of the accounts. In addition, setting up an accounting spreadsheet template which has enabled us to work in tandem with the Membership database. So, despite Viv's departure, but with her continued help, Peter and Andy have been able to successfully complete the Accounts for the independent examiner this year. So it just remains for me to say, on behalf of us all, a big thank you to Viv for her expertise and her continued support as a work party volunteer.

The five elected trustees for the coming year are:

Ian Chambers:	proposed by Ted Smallbone	seconded by Matthew Knowles .
Jenny Greenslade:	proposed by Rosemary Lawson	seconded by Marion Cornwell.
Anne-Marie Smith:	proposed by Bob Lee	seconded by Jas Smallbone.
Andy Smith:	proposed by Brian Smith	seconded by Nicola Church.
Peter Speight:	proposed by Michael Fishwick	seconded by Helen McDonald.

Anne-Marie Smith was elected to be Secretary and Andy Smith as Treasurer.

The election of the five trustees was put to a vote and accepted unanimously with no objections.

Reserves Manager Report

Ian began his talk by explaining that the past year had been a very busy one for BET, especially with the problems resulting from ash dieback which arrived in the UK in 2012. It is expected that 80% to 90% of all ash trees will eventually die. The disease originated in Asia where nature, over time, has adapted so it is not too much of a problem, but in Europe it has been devastating. The fungus spores kill by entering the leaves and then blocks the water transport system. A lightening of the dark green leaves is an early sign of the disease, lesions appear on the bark and the tree rots from the inside. In addition, trees often succumb to a secondary infection from honey fungus. We were then shown a photograph of an ash tree from 2017 - 2021 which besides colour change had lost 30% of leaf density. Because of this problem in 2020 the National Trust felled 40 thousand trees.

Ian then went on to explain that 75% of our reserves have only been woodland since the 1960's. This means that because all the trees grew at the same time, there has been competition for light making them very tall and thin, and the roots shallow because of thin soil on bedrock. Soil creep moving downwards, plus disease, makes additional problems for our trees. In the lower part of the woodland Sooty Bark disease has also presented a problem. It especially affects maples, and is very quick to kill.

It is important for BET to be responsible in dealing with vulnerable trees when it comes to protecting people, houses and cars, as we are bound by 4 acts of parliament.

- Health and Safety at Work Act (1974)
- Occupiers Liability Act (1957 and 1984)
- Highways Act (1980)
- Compensation Act (2006)

We have been advised to fell approximately 800 trees following an independent health and safety assessment by a highly experienced tree specialist company (Alltree Consultants). Initially, 250 high risk trees were recommended for felling within 12 months and the remainder within 3 years – or longer should the disease progress slower than expected. The cost of tree felling has escalated since the deaths of several tree surgeons locally, as now specialist equipment has become essential. MTL have that equipment and a hundred of our most dangerous trees have now been removed at a cost of £36,000. We were expecting road closure costs to be approximately £3,000 but fortunately it cost considerably less at £1,660.

Although losing so many of our trees seems devastating, we should also acknowledge that this can also be seen as an opportunity. New species will take their place thriving on the extra light as nature moves forward. Already individual species are totalled at 837 and climbing. We have also been planting many tree saplings to help replace our ash tree loss, and many more will be planted in the future by volunteers. Hazel will be good as a mid-height tree which is especially popular with dormice. The aim for the reserves is to establish a canopy of two-thirds trees and one-third sky for high diversity of species. The pond along the lower pathway in Badgers Wood will also now benefit from the extra light after the removal of nearby trees.

Two other interesting species which have been discovered are the privet hawkmoth caterpillar and the pyramid orchid. The caterpillar being as much as 4 inches long and heavy is especially fascinating.

Ian then went on to explain the various activities that have been pursued throughout the year. We have continued with surveys on our dormice and bird population; during the growing season there is constant cutting back from the pathways; step repair work; new gate put in at the top of Badgers Wood by viewpoint seat paid for by the Nailsea Footpath Group; high canopy trees have been felled to bring in more light and improve wildlife habitat - also diseased small ash; 2 acres of wildflower meadows have been scythed by hand and the grass removed in order to retain the beneficial nutrient-poor soil.

Another project undertaken in the spring of this year has been the excavation of the Church Town cottage which had been hidden deep within the undergrowth. From old maps we can assume that the cottage was lived in until about 1938. We can just make out the building on an old Cole's Quarry photo. It was very small, measuring only 6 x 4 metres and little of the building exists today. However, a very well built pathway was discovered at the back suggesting that there was a rear garden. One of the most interesting finds on site was an Eiffel Tower lemonade bottle.

Another of our very successful projects was the continuation of the Badgers Wood dry stone wall which we began five years ago. The wall was originally built in the early 1800's and at first it was feared that there was not going to be enough stone to extend the wall. However, the project has now grown into a very stunning feature. A special thanks was given to volunteer Brian Smith who has proved to be an excellent builder. He has spent many hours working on the wall in his own time.

Display boards were another addition with an impressive panorama at the Viewpoint. It proved extremely difficult to get an acceptable series of photographs to form the panorama, but we managed to do so on a particularly clear winter's day. It was possible to discern features 40 miles away. The other board was for the Limestone Pavement as it is such an important geological feature. Both boards were printed on aluminium for longevity.

As the quarry has nesting Peregrine Falcons, this year two chicks were ringed by a licensed British Trust for Ornithology ringer and then returned safely to the nest. It was interesting to note that while the process was happening, the mother Peregrine sat quietly a short distance away. Ringing can provide essential information that can help conserve the species. There were actually three young chicks in the nest but one was considered too small to be ringed. However, it has been noted subsequently that the third chick has developed well. The five man team involved with the project were impressed with the location and ease of access, and BET feel privileged to have been involved with this important work.

Ian then talked about the scything courses that Peter organised this year. There were two held at the stunning site of The Community Farm at Chew Magna and also the Lamplighter's Marsh Nature reserve, Shirehampton. This not only passed on scything knowledge but also earned money for BET.

Finally, Ian gave thanks to all the hard working volunteers, which has enabled BET to achieve so much, and gave out the number of volunteers hours. We regularly have sixteen to eighteen volunteers attending our Monday morning sessions..

Any Questions?

Trevor Riddle then stated that the same team that ringed our Peregrines also ringed a peregrine in Taunton which was subsequently killed by a car – in Morocco! This was the furthest known distance from a ring site recorded.

Hugh Dale then congratulated Ian on his report especially under the emotional circumstances of the ash die-back problem.

Dave Gray then asked a question about whether ash die-back could affect other trees. Ian answered that although ash dieback disease can only affect ash trees, a rise in the number of other fungal diseases, primarily honey fungus, is possible.

Chris Elliott then said that he had been amazed with all the activities and what do you think will amaze the members next year. Ian then suggested that we might continue with the Warrener's Cottage excavations because he had done a tentative dig inside the walls and hit a flagstone floor. This was very promising. Peter interjected with the information that the new North Somerset County Archaeologist Cat Lodge showed a keen interest in pursuing this as the Cottage was a rarity in the County.

Nailsea Rotary Club member Roy Ackrill then asked if BET would like some more tree saplings to plant. Ian answered that any source of trees would be most welcome so, Yes Please!

Elma Porter brought up the question of soil slippage on thin soil and could we replant with a suitable species to replace the ash trees. Ian answered that unfortunately very few species are suitable, but paradoxically ash was the prime one. Also Hazel and Oak were other contenders. It is a specialist subject and would need further investigation.

Jane Elliott said that she had been grateful for Ian's slide of the Privet Hawk Moth in his report as it had identified the disgusting looking creature that she had discovered on her lawn. Ian went on to say that apart from the obvious privet they also liked fuchsias.

Peter Speight gave a special thank you to Chris MacDonald for all his help and advice with the accounts and the changeover of Treasurers. He then went on to explain that as Andy Smith has been Membership Secretary for many years, and as the accounts were largely membership based, the transition should be fairly straightforward.

AOB

Chris Elliott asked if BET had considered Life Membership as an option as other groups had done. Peter said it was worth looking into.

Ted Smallbone brought up the subject of the Ford family and the discovery of an old photograph. This showed a group of boys enacting Nelson's Column and the four Lions at the Jubilee Stone. Peter said that it came to light through Facebook, from the descendants who now lived in Canada. At the time of the picture their great grandmother lived in Warmley. Whilst on the subject of Facebook, Peter then described this fantastic series of five volumes of walks for dog walkers called "The Adventures of Nova, the Golden Retriever". One of the volumes featured our reserves, beautifully illustrated with a 3-D cartoon map.

The proceedings came to an end with a picture on the screen of a pebble embedded in the Badgers Wood dry stone wall, expertly painted with the BET Logo – impressive!

Backwell Environment Trust Accounts 2020/2021

BET Cashflow 2020/21

	UNRESTRICTED FUNDS	RESTRICTED FUNDS	TOTAL FUNDS	2019/20	2018/19
RECEIPTS					
Membership	950.00		950.00	360.00	920.00
Donations with Membership	3,970.00		3,970.00	535.00	-
General Donations & Fundraising	1,569.74	21,000.00	22,569.74	1,424.45	664.85
Grants	782.40		782.40	-	-
Interest	1.19		1.19	22.83	24.03
Gift Aid	182.86		182.86	785.25	-
TOTAL RECEIPTS	7,456.19	21,000.00	28,456.19	3,127.53	1,608.88
PAYMENTS					
Woodland Maintenance					
Tree Work and Survey	2,580.00		2,580.00	-	100.00
Bird & Dormice Boxes	-		-	135.00	84.96
Materials	57.05		57.05	64.21	178.53
Tools	182.40		182.40	222.92	12.71
Other Payments					
Grant Contribution	2,199.71		2,199.71	-	-
Website Hosting	54.39		54.39	53.23	51.95
Printing	303.00		303.00	334.00	331.00
Insurance	261.95		261.95	-	261.95
AGM	-		-	64.10	62.10
Stationery & Postage	56.20		56.20	22.44	6.96
Car Park Rent	-		-	10.00	10.00
TOTAL PAYMENTS	5,694.70	-	5,694.70	905.90	1,100.16
RECEIPTS LESS PAYMENTS	1,761.49	21,000.00	22,761.49	2,221.63	508.72
Balance b/f at 30 Sept			16,762.02	14,540.39	14,033.65
Correcting adjustment					- 1.98
BALANCE AT BANK			39,523.51	16,762.02	14,540.39

BET Balance Sheet at 30 September 2021

Assets

Land	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds
	£	£	£
Woodlands - cost	101657.66		101657.66
Tools - estimated	1500.00		1500.00
	103157.66		103157.66
Banks			
HSBC Current	6472.95	21000.00	27472.95
HSBC Deposit	12050.56		12050.56
	18523.51	21000.00	39523.51
Debtors and Prepayments (1.)	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total Assets	121681.17	21000.00	142681.17
Liabilities			
Creditors and accruals (1.)	0.00	0.00	0.00
NET ASSETS	121681.17	21000.00	142681.17

NOTES

1. There are no Debtors or Creditors detailed on the Balance Sheet as BET accounts are currently run on a cash basis.

BET AGM

13th November 2021



CHARITY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Independent examiner's report on the accounts

Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

**Report to the trustees/
members of**

Charity Name
Backwell Environmental Trust

**On accounts for the year
ended**

30 September 2021

**Charity no
(if any)**

1109406

Set out on pages

1 - 2

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended 30/09/2021.

**Responsibilities and
basis of report**

As the charity trustees of the Trust, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

**Independent
examiner's statement**

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

** Please delete the words in the brackets if they do not apply.*

Signed:

Date:

7 November 2021

Name:

Chris MacDonald

**Relevant professional
qualification(s) or body
(if any):**

ACA

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Backwell

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