

38th Annual General Meeting Minutes

3 July 2024 from 2-4pm in the Great Oak Hall and via Teams

including Arboretum Tours

Attendance:

29 Members in person and 3 remotely plus Trustees, FE and FoWA Staff.

This was the first opportunity to meet in person since the pandemic and the AGM was followed by a summer celebration which included Arboretum Tours and talks from Forestry England experts.

1. Welcome

The Chair, Neil Sachdev MBE welcomed Members to the Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum 38th AGM. He thanked Members for their support and urged them to encourage their friends to become Members.

2. Minutes of 37th AGM 2023

Minutes of the previous AGM were made available before the meeting and can be found on the Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum website. There were no comments or questions.

Outcome: The Minutes of the 37th AGM 2023 were approved.

3. 2023 FoWA Review Presentation – CEO, Emma Griffiths

Highlights of the presentation are as follows:

- Membership has risen (36,418 at the end of December 2023).
- We are grateful to Forestry England Volunteers who signed up 695 new members this year.
- A partnership with Goodwill Partnership for will writing has been launched in recognition of what the Arboretum has meant to so many throughout their lives.
- FoWA has continued to fund Forestry England roles to enable FE to deliver on the projects funded by FoWA via grants
- We are working with Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, National Trust and Gloucestershire Community Rail Partnership, Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Local Nature Partnership to improve access to nature by developing sustainable transport to all our sites.
- We have raised £240,000 in Trusts and Grants.
- We secured £56,000 from Individual Giving (e.g. support a square, benches and leaves of life).
- We awarded £226,000 in new grants (and £291,000 in relation to previously awarded grants).
- We paid £719,000 for our annual payment to the Arboretum to secure access for our Members.
- Major projects/activities this year:
 - Silk Wood Community Planting Project (this has been a pilot for collaboration on funding and delivery of a project with Forestry England)
 - Play Project
 - New visitor shuttle bus which can go deeper into the Arboretum
 - Wild Wood Children's Literature Festival.
- We said farewell to Trustees Mike Mintram, Martin Green, Gavin Grant and Bev Bottrill and welcomed new Trustees Neil Sachdev, Nigel Frost and Christian Walker.

- Looking ahead, we will continue to contribute to the Arboretum Development Masterplan including tree conservation locally and globally; help deliver Arboretum Development Projects, improve the supporter journey and increase stakeholder engagement.
- It is the charity's 40th Birthday next year and the 25th anniversary of the building of the Great Oak Hall.

4. Auditors Update

New auditors, Godfrey Wilson were appointed during the year and thanks were given to previous auditors Bishop Fleming.

Members were thanked for attending and encouraged to send further questions via email after the meeting (a response will be provided).

Arboretum Tours

Members joined Tours of the Arboretum to see the Wollemi Pine Meta collection and hear from Tree Conservation Manager, Dan Crowley, about the journey and challenges of bringing samples to Europe. A group of Members were taken to the Community Shelter to hear from Community Co-ordinator, Mandy Leivers about how the shelter was designed and built and the ways in which community groups use it for vital confidence building programmes and woodland skills. Another group were taken to see the Silkwood Community Planting Project to hear from Woodland Community Engagement Officer, Meg Walder-Hills about the work to design the future of the forest, clear the ground and meticulously plant 9,000 carefully chosen saplings.