

FRIENDS OF WEIR WOOD SOCIETY CONSTITUTION

ORIGINAL: 4th May 2007

Amendment 7: AGM accepted 8th April 2022

Friends of Weir Wood Society (Referred to in this document as the Society)

The Society was set up in 1996 to give volunteer assistance and show local support for this important inland wildlife refuge site. Designated a SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest) because of its importance as a site for birds that attracts a rich community of breeding, wintering and passage birds. The site traditionally well known for its resident Great Crested Grebes and passage Osprey, also has one of the largest heronries in Sussex and attracts breeding Common Terns. The area also holds a wide variety of plants, animals and insect species with the wild flower meadows at Whillet's being one of its richest and most productive. This area also includes a wildlife rich phragmites reed bed supporting important breeding and winter roosting birds and has locally rare plants such as Orange Foxtail.

AIMS & OBJECTIVES

The Society has adopted the following aims:

1. To try and obtain improved longer term management security for the SSSI Nature Reserve. (Nb. The Management Plans are currently being written by volunteers and managed on 12 monthly renewable contracts with Southern Water, the same contract applies to the ESCC Rangers who provide us with essential power tool assistance).
2. To protect and promote wildlife conservation within the statutory SSSI Nature Reserve areas.
3. To restore and improve habitat with management plan consent from Natural England under the conditions of the SSSI.
4. To promote public awareness of the ecological importance of the site, and the vital role it plays as a wildlife amenity for the local community.
5. To keep records of the bird species seen, breeding activity and nest box use.
6. To increase knowledge of the biodiversity at the site.
7. To set up an archive of local wildlife records and history of the site.
8. To provide information to environmental authorities and to participate in county and national data collection schemes and surveys.
9. To work with the relevant authorities and any environmental agencies for conservation management at Weir Wood.
10. To encourage and co-operate with appropriate research projects.
11. To publish, as appropriate, information, survey results and progress reports relating to the wildlife and its conservation.
12. To provide electronically accessible information about the Nature Reserve and our Society.

In furtherance of the above aims, the Society will:-

1. Be receptive to any possibilities to tie up with Wildlife Trusts or similar recognised large wildlife bodies that may wish to take over the management of the site, and to whom we would continue to give volunteer assistance.

2. Publicise its activities in order to attract more members and also volunteers to help with maintaining and improving the habitat.
3. Carry out practical habitat maintenance and improvement projects and surveys in accordance with any agreed Management Plan. Seek grants and sponsorship where necessary to support any practical conservation project work and to improve facilities for wildlife observation and study.
4. Involve the members of the Society in its activities such as “Open Days” to promote and educate both members and the public about the site, develop ideas for improving public awareness and education.
5. Keep database records for our more recent reported bird sightings through our website, which are forwarded annually to the Sussex Ornithological Society. Nest box and ringing surveys are carried out regularly and recorded.
6. Carry out survey work on the site biodiversity, using volunteers where we have sufficient knowledge to carry this out, but also involve outside expertise where necessary. We also organise wildlife visits for members and put out educational material for informing the public.
7. We keep a database covering all the wildlife sightings and surveys undertaken at the reserve.
8. Assist any environmental organisations with suitable volunteers to help carry out Weir Wood survey work. We also provide suitable liability cover and insurance as necessary to protect the volunteers and the Society.
9. Seek the advice and help of ecological and environmental experts such as the Wildlife Trust or environmental agencies, or other experts for management guidance when necessary.
10. We will provide records of sightings and data to any relevant research bodies that require them and cooperate with others carrying out specialist projects at the site.
11. Inform members of the Society of its activities via a newsletter or other publicity. We have also published a 25th anniversary book “The Nature of Weir Wood Reservoir”.
12. We have a website giving sightings, general information and photos, a facebook group for general wildlife discussion and information, and a secure electronic storage area for Committee documents.

AIMS & OBJECTIVES DOCUMENT HISTORY

April 1997 – Original document date.

May 2007 - Rule 8 objective amended.

April 2014 Amendments New item 12 - Recognising the role of the website.

Aims & Objectives furtherance amendment changes: Item 3 - Committee representations are widened. Item 7 - Scope widened to include our Open Days. Item 8 - Added the required provision of liability cover which should include any necessary insurances. Item 10 - Widened the scope of our wildlife recording for the site.

Sept 2021 – Aims & Objectives were out of date and now completely revised to reflect the current position with the Friends effectively left solely running the management of the nature reserve with Southern Water short term contracts and Ranger support from ESCC.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

Aim: The Friends of Weir Wood aims to create the conditions whereby all members are treated solely on the basis of their merits, abilities and potential, regardless of gender, colour, and ethnic or national origin, age, social economic background, disability, religious or political beliefs, family circumstance, sexual orientation or other distinction.

Objective: The declared objective of the Friends of Weir Wood is to be truly open to all sections of the community and to encourage all to participate fully and equally to fulfil their potential.

CONSTITUTION RULES

MEMBERSHIP

1. An applicant for membership shall pay an annual subscription (£3 - effective from 1/10/2010), payable on 1st January in each year. Any member whose subscription is four months in arrears shall cease to be a member, unless the arrears are paid up. Any person whose membership has ceased, may apply to re-join on payment of the annual subscription, in such case, membership shall re-commence from the date of payment.
2. When an applicant pays the first subscription on or after the 1st October, the payment shall count as payment for the following year.
3. Members shall be entitled to vote at general meetings, to serve on the Committee, to hold any office, or to nominate any other member for office.
4. Every member, having paid the subscription for the year, shall be entitled to receive the Society's Newsletters, copies of the Agenda and Accounts for the Annual General meeting and due notice of Extraordinary General Meetings.
5. Every member shall observe the common laws relating to the protection of wildlife and shall not disclose any information which may lead to a breach of those laws. In addition, every member shall observe:
 - a. all special conditions which are applicable to Weir Wood reservoir as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI);
 - b. all regulations and bye-laws imposed by the landowner;
 - c. any other statutory protection measures which may be added in the future.

Any member found to be in breach of this rule shall be sent a letter by first class post to his/her last recorded address, stating the nature of the alleged offence and giving the right to the member to make representation concerning the matter to the Committee within 28 days of such notification having been sent. Having considered any such representation, the Committee may, at its discretion, deprive the member of his/her membership.

COMMITTEE & MANAGEMENT OF BUSINESS

6. The business of the Society shall be managed by a Committee, consisting of the Honorary Officers and Committee members, duly elected at the AGM and who shall hold office until the next following AGM. It shall be the duty of the Committee to manage the business of the Society in accordance with the Approved Aims & Objectives.
7. The Honorary officers of the Society shall be the Chairman, Treasurer, General & Minute Secretary, Membership Secretary and Website Editor. The Committee may appoint other Honorary officers, as required, who, if not already members, shall thereupon become de facto members of the Committee.
8. The Chairman shall preside at all General meetings but if the Chairman is unable to perform this duty, then the Committee shall appoint a Deputy for the meeting.
9. The Secretary shall conduct the official correspondence of the Society and keep proper minutes of all proceedings and records of all official business.
10. The Treasurer shall keep the accounts and shall prepare the Annual Statement of Accounts and Balance Sheet to the 31st December in each year. The Treasurer shall produce at the AGM a copy of the audited accounts as at the 31st December of the preceding year, for inspection by members. The Membership Secretary shall keep a register of the members.
11. An Honorary Auditor shall be appointed at the AGM, being a person who may or may not be a member of the Society but shall not hold any other office nor be a member of the Committee. If the appointed person becomes unable to perform the duties of the office, the Committee may appoint a Deputy to act until the next AGM.
12. The Committee shall have a maximum number of 12 members. The Committee may from time to time appoint additional Committee members to fill any casual vacancies. Any member appointed under this rule shall retire at the next following AGM but shall be eligible for re-election without nomination.

GENERAL MEETINGS

13. The Committee shall summon an AGM of the Society once in every calendar year, giving notice to the membership of time and place and the business to be transacted. All other general meetings shall be called Extraordinary General Meetings. The Committee may convene an EGM, whenever deemed necessary, and one shall be called if requested in writing by at least ten members of the Society. The Committee shall give notice to the membership of all special resolutions, including those for the amendment of rules, for the making of new rules, and for the dissolution of the Society.
14. At any general meeting, 10 members personally present and entitled to vote shall be a quorum, and a resolution shall be decided on a show of hands by a majority of the members present, voting and entitled to vote. In the event of an equal number of votes

for and against a resolution, the chairman of the meeting shall have a casting vote and declare whether the resolution has been carried or lost.

ELECTIONS

15. At every AGM the Society shall elect the Honorary Officers and members of the Committee for the ensuing year. If there should be only one candidate for an office, or if the number of eligible candidates for membership of the Committee does not exceed the prescribed maximum, voting shall be by show of hands. If there should be more than one candidate for an office or more than the prescribed maximum of candidates for membership of the Committee, voting shall be by secret ballot in such case.

16. A retiring Honorary Officer or member of the Committee shall be eligible for re-election without nomination. Nomination of candidates shall be made by any two members of the Society, entitled to vote, and may be sent to the Secretary prior to the AGM or announced at the AGM.

AMENDMENT OF RULES

17. No rules, including the Aims and Objectives of the Society, shall be repealed or amended and no new rule made, save by a special resolution passed at a general meeting (i.e. carried on a show of hands by a two-thirds majority of the members present, voting and entitled to vote).

LIMIT ON COMMITTEE AUTHORITY FOR VIREMENT OF ADDITIONAL FUNDS TO CAPITAL EXPENDITURE

18. Where capital expenditure on any project is insufficiently covered by existing allocated funds, income or grants received, the Committee may, without prior approval of the membership, allocate additional funds by virement from other budgets up to a limit in any one calendar year, which shall be the lesser of £500 or such sum as shall ensure that there remain sufficient reserves to cover all committed and anticipated expenditure. This shall not preclude the Committee from using the same authority in respect of the same project in any subsequent calendar year.

DONATIONS, LEGACIES & GRANTS

19. All monies and benefits in kind, donated or given by bequest, shall be properly accounted for. The Committee shall apply all such monies and benefits in accordance with the wishes of the donors, where specifically expressed, and in promotion of the Aims and Objectives of the Society, save that donations given with subscriptions may be applied, at the discretion of the Committee, to defray the costs of producing and distributing the Newsletters and other running costs.

20. All grants made by governmental bodies, organisations, institutions or companies, shall be properly accounted for. The Committee shall apply such grants in accordance with

any specified terms and conditions of the said grants and in promotion of the Aims and Objectives of the Society.

REMUNERATION OF EXPENSES & EX-GRATIA PAYMENTS

- 21.** The Committee may authorise remuneration of out-of-pocket expenses to any officer or member of the Society in return for services rendered to the Society. Where it is deemed appropriate, the Committee may also make an ex-gratia payment to any person who has provided assistance or given unpaid time to the Society.

Where a Committee member has been issued with and signed in order to hold a FOWW Society Debit Card for the payment of approved Society costs, they will be responsible for the safe keeping and control of that card. The Treasurer is responsible for the administration and ultimate control of all cards operating on the Society accounts. Only a Committee Member can be issued with a card which must be returned on leaving the Committee, or when requested by the Treasurer or The Committee.

Security Note: At the time of every Debit Card transaction over £50 our bank will automatically send a text to the Treasurer, plus he will receive a weekly text detailing all the transactions for that week. Thus the Treasurer will be quickly informed of every card use, and any unauthorised use will be identified and dealt with to protect the funds.

DISSOLUTION

- 22.** If at any general meeting a special resolution for the dissolution of the Society shall be passed by a two-thirds majority of the fully paid-up members of the Society present and voting and that resolution shall be confirmed by secret ballot of the whole membership of the Society, within 6 weeks thereafter, the Committee shall thereupon, or at such future date as shall be specified in such resolution, proceed to discharge the liabilities of the Society. If, after such discharge of liabilities, there remains any monies or assets whatsoever, the same shall be given or transferred to a Local Sussex Wildlife group such as the Sussex Wildlife Trust or Sussex Ornithological Society to be agreed by the members at that time. If effect cannot be given to the aforesaid provision then the said monies and assets shall be given instead to some non-governmental body, the objects of which are to protect wildlife, within the same local Sussex area.

DIGITAL ASSETS

- 23.** Digital Assets – Defined as website hosting, domain names, licences, and software and digital copies of works explicitly about the Society and/or Weir Wood (unless otherwise agreed with said author(s)).

a) Access details/copies of licences should be held by more than just the individual who initially creates or controls/uses the digital asset. Up-to-date details need to be kept within the Committee.

b) Should the Member holding/using the digital asset no longer wish to be a Member of the Society or is unable to be a Member any more, for whatever reason, the digital asset needs

to be secured by the Society as it is their right to own and hold it, and not that of the individual.

c) Should the Society disband/dissolve then any digital assets will be returned to the Chairman who will ensure that there is no Data Protection violations and the digital asset is appropriately dissolved or destroyed.

24. Digital Photographs - Not strictly considered to be a digital asset the Society own/control, unless said photograph has been used by the Society either in published works or website media and agreed with the original author/photographer that the Society own the right to use and hold the digital asset(s).

CONSTITUTION RULES DOCUMENT HISTORY

ORIGINAL: 4th May 2007 - Aims & Objectives - Were an amalgamation of some earlier documents from 1997. Rule 8 objective was amended May 2007.

Amendment 1: 22nd April 2010 - Constitution amendment to Rule 1 - Membership subscription increase to £3.

Amendment 2: 4th April 2014 - Aims & Objectives amendments New item 12 - Recognising the role of the website.

Aims & Objectives “Furtherance” amendment changes: Item 3 - Committee representations are widened. Item 7 - Scope widened to include our Open Days. Item 8 - Added the required provision of liability cover which should include any necessary insurances. Item 10 - Widened the scope of our wildlife recording for the site.

Amendment 3: 8th April 2016 - Constitution amendment to Rule 7 - Honorary Officers List Descriptions amended. Two new positions recognised, Membership Secretary & Website Editor, Secretary redefined into General & Minute Secretary.

Amendment 4: 7th April 2017 – Constitution amendment to Rule 7 – Honorary Officers list. Description change so Membership Secretary & Website Editor roles are recognised as separate electable posts.

Amendment 5: Committee agreed June 2018 – Constitution amendment to Rule 21 – Remuneration of Expenses & Ex-gratia Payments. Addition of the rules governing the use of FOWW Society Debit Cards issued to Committee Members.

Amendment 6: Committee agreed September 2018 – Constitution amendment to Rule 21 – Amendment of the “Security Note” detailing how our Bank will inform us of any Debit Card transactions on our account.- **AGM accepted 29th March 2019**

Amendment 7: Committee agreed October 2021 - Major update of Aims & Objectives. In Constitution Rules the word “irrelevant” removed from Equal opportunities statement. In Item 10 of Committee Business – The Membership Secretary not Treasurer will be responsible for maintaining the register of members. In item 22 – Dissolution (Removal of 2006 date fixture for description of local area)

Committee agreed January 2022 – Inclusion of new sections 23 & 24 regarding Digital Assets & Photographs.-

AGM accepted all of Amendment 7: on 8th April 2022.