

It is a pleasure to present to you my report as Chair and even better to do so in person.

It always amazes me when I look back to the beginning of the year under review, in this case February 2020, at how much has happened in, not just that year, but in the intervening period from its conclusion to the AGM. It is a hugely rewarding exercise confirming as it does the significant work undertaken and the enthusiasm, dedication, and resilience of MWT's staff and volunteers.

2020-21 was Leigh Morris's first year in post as CEO and you will be hearing from him next about what an extraordinary year it has been.

It leaves me to state some headline achievements and to express my sincere thanks first to Leigh for his drive and good-humoured pragmatism when facing the various challenges presented. Such challenges are always significant when taking on a CEO role but even more remarkable when faced, within 6 weeks of starting, with the first Covid related lock down. Unprecedented. You can appreciate the difficulties of getting to know your team, and the Trustees, by "remote" means with very few opportunities to meet in person.

An early priority as outlined at last year's AGM was to produce a new strategy for MWT taking us forward from 2020 and setting those ambitious targets essential to help us to deliver positively, with others, a pathway to address the issues of biodiversity loss, climate change and people's disconnection with nature. The final version of the strategy was set out in last autumn's magazine and is available on the website. This was no small feat and I extend my thanks to all involved, especially Leigh who has brought another dimension to MWT's work and purpose. I hope you have had a chance to read it and please, after the formal business has concluded, feel free to ask any questions you may have. I am very pleased to say that work on the strategy has not stopped as we continue to develop it and the underlying delivery plan while implementing certain elements and prioritising/ reprioritising as resources allow.

We knew that to deliver the ambitions in the strategy and step up to face the crises facing our world MWT needed to revise its governance structure to be even more nimble and provide additional support and expertise when needed. We needed to supplement our Council with Trustees who possessed required skill sets. Our approach was radical in as far as MWT has never previously publicly advertised for Trustees and this is what we did with outstanding results. When the window for applications closed at the end of January, we had received over 30 applicants for 8 positions.

We are now into the current year but it's appropriate to continue both to provide background but also to emphasise how important it is to position MWT for at least the next ten years to make the real difference essential to achieve our vision. From Council the Trustees selected an interview panel comprising in addition to myself and Leigh, Kim, Rachel, and Simon. A huge thank you to them for the many hours committed over February and March when due to a further Covid lock down, we carried out the selection process and interviews via Zoom – another first. We had an extremely difficult job sifting high quality applicants first down to 20 and then to the final 8 who joined MWT as directors on 29th March and who have just been re-elected at this meeting. I am also pleased to say this process has had a huge spin off benefit as several applicants who were not successful due to the outstanding quality of the field (and the few places available) have still engaged with us and are actively involved in committees and groups. This is a massive boost thank you so much to all those inspired by what MWT is doing, and intends to do, and have joined with us to achieve our ambitions.

Covid meant that for several months Leigh and the staff worked from home or, when able to do so, on site progressing work commitments and ensuring projects were kept going if possible. Particularly in the early part of the year our volunteers could not carry out most of the huge range of work MWT

relies on them to do ranging from muckers on the reserves to those in the shop. A massive thank you to everyone for not only persevering through those times, often difficult for them personally, but also for coming back to help as soon as restrictions lifted. Safety concerns remain paramount for all those involved in delivering our objectives and we have been reacting, and will continue to react, as quickly as possible to the advice and instructions provided by Government to keep everyone safe.

However, even given the difficulties caused by Covid, opportunities have also been created. Working from home is now the norm which has many advantages although making the office an attractive place to work when appropriate is also important. Additionally, although personal contact has reduced, the frequency and extent of interaction albeit remotely has developed hugely. One example of this is our participation in the work and processes of the wider federation of Wildlife Trusts which enables us to “tap into” a huge reservoir of knowledge and experience. As members we can all enjoy the Wild Live presentations on U Tube enabling engagement in ways we barely considered previously.

If I may, I will finish on a personal note. I have been a Trustee of Manx Wildlife Trust for over 9 years including 5 as Chair and in accordance with the resolution just approved will continue for a short time more. This extension is to achieve a transition to a new Chair who will be part of the team to build on what has already been achieved, an exciting and demanding prospect. However, at this point I want to put on record my grateful thanks to the many people I have had the privilege of working with and by virtue of my role meeting with over that time. From my own experience and knowledge, I hope I have added some value, but I know I have gained much more. Whilst I have always valued and enjoyed nature my eyes have been opened to the natural world to an extent, I would never have thought possible. I have enjoyed being involved with so many people of like mind. It has been stimulating, hugely enjoyable and provided an insight which very few other roles can provide. I strongly believe in that well known acronym TEAM - together everyone achieves more. Every individual can help in some way if they are encouraged /empowered to do so and with all the amazing people involved with MWT whether as Trustees, staff, volunteers, partners, donors, members or supporters I have great optimism that we will achieve our vision by protecting and restoring the wildlife of our wonderful Island and its surrounding seas.

Thank you