

Northumberland Wildlife Trust Limited
Company Number 717813, Charity Number 21819

Council's Support Structure
Remits and Liaison

1 Introduction

Council's role, as set out in the document 'Role and Terms of Reference for Council', is to act as the Trust's governing body. Its principal tasks are to set strategic direction and policy, to ensure delivery of the Trust's objects and to uphold the Trust's values. It is the legal entity which is ultimately responsible for everything which the Trust does, and it is accountable for the organisation's financial regularity and all other aspects of propriety.

As a body, it should not be involved in management or in day to day operational issues. It follows from this that a support structure is required to allow the Trust to function. The objectives of this support structure are as follows:

- to run the Trust on a day to day basis
- to ensure that the Trust operates efficiently and effectively
- to provide information, advice and guidance to Council
- to provide a mechanism for stakeholder involvement and feedback as required.
- to implement Trust policy and strategic direction (led by the Chief Executive)

2 Overview of the support structure

As the Trust's governing body, Council must determine the support structure it requires, monitor its activity and review its performance periodically. This document sets out the Council's support structure, which will be regularly reviewed to ensure that it remains fit for purpose.

The structure as currently proposed falls into four categories:

- CEO and staff
- Technical teams
- Advice and guidance
- Sub-committee

This document sets out the remit and structure for each of the above categories. It also sets out how effective liaison between trustees and staff will be ensured.

A diagram of the proposed structure is shown in Appendix A.

3 Chief Executive and staff

3.1 Remit

Council delegates day to day management and operation of the Trust to its Chief Executive and, through that post, to the staff. The detail of this delegation is shown in a separate document, 'Delegation of Authority to the Chief Executive'.

The over-arching requirements of the staff are to deliver against the Trust's agreed business plan and annual targets and to manage every aspect of the Trust in line with best practice. The Chief Executive's remit, over and above operational matters, is to provide strategic leadership and policy development.

Staff are ultimately accountable to Council, through the Chief Executive, and will report to Council on a regular basis. Staff will also provide information, advice and guidance to Council as required.

3.2 Structure

The Trust is a significant and complex organisation. This means that, in order to enable effective management, the staff team is organised into a hierarchy with a team of senior managers who report to the Chief Executive.

Clarity of purpose and of role is achieved through a variety of mechanisms. At the organisational level, the Business Plan which is agreed by Council provides overall guidance and broad goals. At the team level, managers 'translate' these broad goals into specific team objectives, which can be both ongoing and developmental.

At the individual level, all staff have job descriptions which set out their roles in some detail. Specific objectives for each staff member are agreed as part of the annual PDR process and are based around the team objectives. Monitoring of delivery against the objectives is also done as part of the PDR process, as well as at team level through team meetings, and at organisational level through 6 month progress reports against the business plan to Council.

4 **Technical Teams**

The remits for the technical teams are set out below. They have no delegated authority beyond that set out in the document 'Delegation of Authority to the Chief Executive'.

4.1 **Health & Safety Team**

4.1.1 Remit

The remit of this team is as follows:

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- to lead on management of all H&S issues within the Trust
- to monitor compliance with the H&S policy
- to take professional advice as needed
- to report to Trustees on at least an annual basis

4.1.2 Structure

The team will be led by the Chief Executive and will comprise all managers. The H&S Officer will have an input when required.

H&S management and monitoring will be addressed at every operational management team meeting.

4.2 Governance Group

4.2.1 Remit

The remit of this group is as follows:

- To review the Trust's governance documentation and to recommend changes to Council
- To review the Trust's governance systems and support the Chair in ensuring that the Trust operates in line with best practice guidance for governance

4.2.2 Structure

The group will be led by the Chair and will comprise the Vice-Chair, Honorary Secretary, CEO and Director of Finance and Central Services. The group will meet at least once a year.

5 Advice and Guidance

5.1 Conservation Advisory Group

5.1.1 Remit

The remit of this forum is as follows:

- to debate issues of a specific conservation nature, including land management and people and wildlife
- to formulate policy for Council approval
- to act as a 'think tank' on all conservation issues affecting the Trust, both pure conservation and conservation through awareness
- to advise Council on the strategic direction and emphasis of the Trust's conservation work
- to promote specific conservation initiatives which the Trust might adopt

The group is convened on an 'as required' basis as an advisory group.

5.1.2 Structure

The group will include relevant staff, trustees, members and specialist advisors as appropriate and all participants will have equal status. All staff and trustees will be able to attend if they wish; other participation will be through invitation. There will be standing participants, but other people can be brought in as and when required. The group should be kept to a manageable size.

Officer reports should not be provided unless they are required to provide background information.

The group will be convened when guidance on specific issue/issues is required, and will be chaired by an appropriate trustee or staff member.

5.1.3 Delegated Authority

The forum has no delegated authority from Council. Any policy documentation or other issue of strategic significance must be referred to Council. A summary of the group's activity should be provided to Council once completed.

5.2 Management Support Group

5.2.1 Remit

The remit of this Group is as follows:

- to provide a sounding board as direct support for senior managers
- to act as an information-sharing forum
- to help honorary officers deliver the additional responsibilities of their roles, over and above trusteeship

5.2.2 Structure

The team will be led by the Chair and will normally comprise the Chair, Vice-chair, Treasurer and Secretary, together with the Chief Executive and senior managers as required. The Group will meet at least 3 times a year.

5.2.3 Delegated Authority

The team has no delegated authority as a body in its own right, except in or specific circumstances which will be individually designated by Council and recorded in Council minutes. Any required decisions will either be taken by the Chief Executive and staff as part of their delegated authority, or referred to Council.

6 Sub-committee

6.1 Finance and Risk Committee (FRC)

The Finance and Risks Committee (FRC) is a sub-committee of Council. Council has delegated authority to FRC for ensuring that suitable financial systems and controls are in place and are working effectively, and that risks are properly identified, managed, mitigated and reported. A separate FRC terms of reference is held within the governance documents.

7 Communication between Council and staff

It is clear from the support structure outlined in this document that the two key elements in the operation of the Trust are Council and the staff team. With a small Council with a streamlined support structure, it is crucial that there be close and active collaboration and good communication between Council and, in particular, the Chief Executive and senior staff.

This will be achieved through a variety of mechanisms, as follows:

- senior manager reports to Council
- provision of information about trustee skills to staff
- a formal requirement for staff, particularly managers, to liaise and consult appropriately with trustees as a normal part of their work
- informal networking between staff and trustees
- formal networking events

7.1 Reports to Council

Senior managers will make brief reports highlighting significant issues, activity or developments in their areas of responsibility to each Council meeting. The aim of the reports should be to keep Council well-informed, in general terms, about activity in the organisation.

7.2 Trustee skills audit information and requirement to consult

Whilst Council as a body should not be involved in management or in day to day operational issues, the opportunity for trustees to voluntarily make their skills available to advise and guide staff will be encouraged. A culture of closer working, liaison and consultation between trustees and staff should be established, in which any trustee might be consulted or involved as and when appropriate and according to their skills, knowledge and interest.

To facilitate this informal networking, information about the trustees' skills and experience will be circulated to staff, and vice-versa. Opportunities for staff and trustee engagement will be organised to encourage interaction and informal contact opportunities as below.

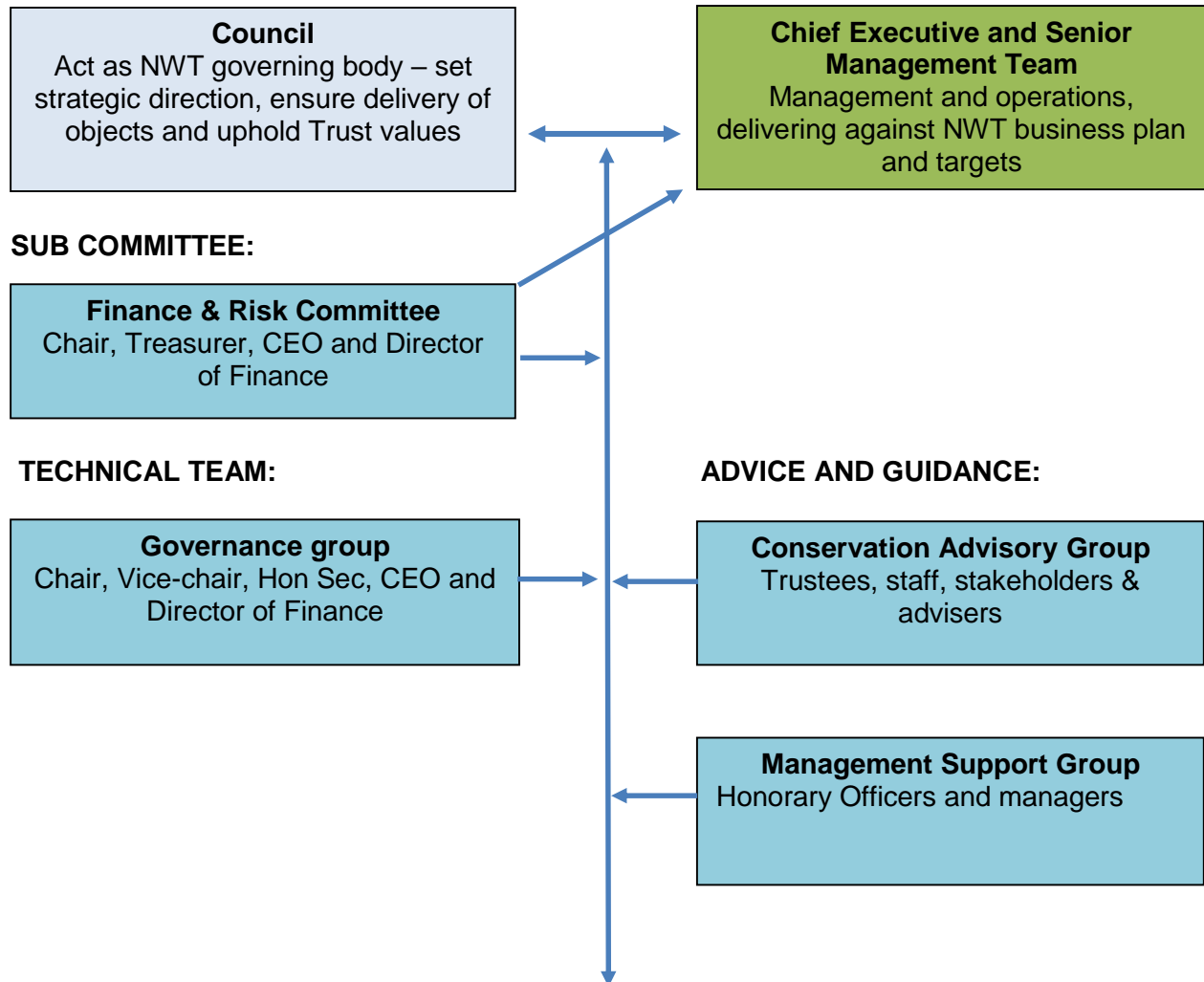
7.3 Informal networking

It is important that Council know who the staff are, and vice versa, and that there are unforced opportunities for contact. . Appropriate opportunities for the Trustee and staff networking will be taken as they arise, whilst avoiding being prescriptive.

7.4 Formal networking

Formal networking events, perhaps with particular themes linked to the development of the Trust, should be arranged as a means of facilitating contact between staff and trustees. Attendance at such events should be mandatory.

Appendix A
Diagrammatic presentation of support structure



Last review: January 2020
Next review: January 2022