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Environment Wildlife

Land Securities director abandons attempt to become wildlife trustee

Financial controller of company planning to build on nightingale sanctuary withdraws his name from ballot for voluntary post

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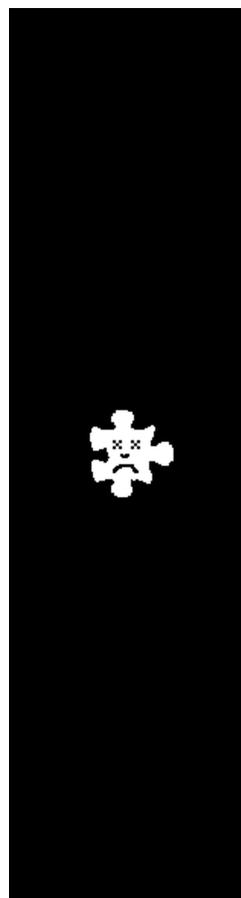
James Meikle theguardian.com, Thursday 18 September 2014 18.12 BST Jump to comments (19)



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Lodge Hill in Kent, a key breeding site for nightingales in the UK. Medway council has approved permission to build 5,000 homes on the site Photograph: Graham Turner/Guardian

A director of the UK's biggest commercial property company which angered environmental campaigners over its plans to build 5,000 homes on a nationally protected area which is a haven for nightingales has abandoned an attempt to become a trustee of London's main wildlife group.

Marc Cadwaladr, group financial controller of Land Securities, was among five people put forward to join the board of the London Wildlife Trust (LWT) at its annual meeting on Saturday next week, but said on Thursday he would not be standing after all, pending a government decision on the controversial proposals.

The decision caught LWT by surprise and came after apparent unease among some members. The change

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of heart came after other charities had rallied round the LWT board, saying such organisations needed the expertise of high-level professionals.

A spokeswoman for Land Securities told the Guardian that it could confirm Cadwaladr “is not standing for election as a trustee of the London Wildlife Trust”. The LWT had earlier on Thursday insisted Cadwaladr would be joining as a volunteer and could bring significant financial skills, capabilities and experience.

Land Securities recently won outline planning permission to develop a site which includes the only designated UK breeding site for [nightingales](#) and what campaigners say is irreplaceable woodland and important natural grassland. The area, made a special site of scientific interest (SSSI) last year, is also home to rare [Duke of Burgundy butterflies](#).

Medway council has already referred material on the future of ministry of defence land at [Lodge Hill](#) on the Hoo peninsular, to the communities secretary Eric Pickles and [Natural England](#), the government’s advisory body, after its planning committee gave outline permission. Cadwaladr said in a statement that until Pickles’s department had made its decision “it doesn’t feel right to let my name go forward for election as a trustee of the London Wildlife Trust.”

LWT, which had said trustees could be appointed without a ballot of members since there are five vacancies, later clarified the issue saying members could vote either by attending the annual meeting or by arranging proxy votes.

A trust member who wished to remain anonymous told the Guardian: “While a charity might benefit from someone with financial experience gained in the private sector, Cadwaladr’s sudden desire to help (the trust) does suggest that Land Securities is attempting to influence board level decision-making within the charity.”

LWT said in its first statement on Thursday: “We recognise that Land Securities has rightly faced intense criticism for its proposed plans to build on a SSSI on the Hoo peninsular, and we fully support our colleagues who have fought, and will continue to fight, this shocking destruction of such a unique wildlife site.

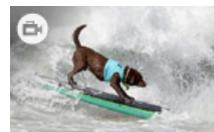
“Marc Cadwaladr, if he is elected to serve as a trustee for London Wildlife Trust, would not do so as a staff member of Land Securities, but as a volunteer who, in his spare time, could bring significant financial skills, capabilities and experience to the trust.”

The statement continued: “Our trustees are elected democratically by, and from within, our membership; and they will have an opportunity to meet and question



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Marc at our AGM, before voting on his and other trustees' nominations."

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Elaine Sullivan, chair of the LWT, said later in the day: "Marc has excellent financial skills which could have greatly strengthened the Trust's capabilities and we deeply regret that he has decided to withdraw his nomination to become a trustee. This now leaves a significant skills gap in the board, which we must now seek to address."

John Bennett, chief executive of [Kent Wildlife Trust](#), which is fighting the Lodge Hill development and whose governance has no connection with the London organisation, said before news of Cadwaladr's withdrawal: "Trustees of charities are appointed as individuals with responsibilities to the charity not as representatives of other interests. What I share with LWT is the need to secure high-level professional skills to support the work of the Board and throughout the voluntary sector financial skills are difficult to obtain."

The [Wildlife Trusts](#), a coalition of 47 independent charities across the UK, took the same view. Stephen Trotter, its director for England, said Medway council and the MoD had a national responsibility to look after Lodge Hill for the benefit of our own and future generations, not destroy it.

But, Trotter added, trustees of trusts "are appointed as individuals, on a voluntary basis, for their skills and experience; in this case, financial expertise. To refuse to consider Marc Cadwaladr for this position would hold back London Wildlife Trust from developing and making a greater difference for people and wildlife."



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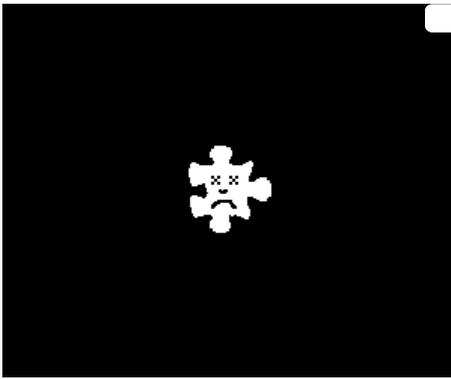
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4 PEOPLE, 8 COMMENTS



MarkNFisher

18 September 2014 8:11pm

4

Wildlife Trusts don't have a clue about governance and accountability. Nominations and elections are an inconvenience to them. The trustees rarely have control over the actions of their trusts, if they even understand or know what is going on.



Albert Ravey MarkNFisher

18 September 2014 8:20pm

3

How does this comment relate to this article?



MarkNFisher Albert Ravey

18 September 2014 11:06pm

3

LWT, which had said trustees could be appointed without a ballot of members since there are five vacancies, later clarified the issue saying members could vote either by attending the annual meeting or by arranging proxy votes.

Show 5 more replies

Last reply: 19 September 2014 9:55pm

4 PEOPLE, 5 COMMENTS



wild586loris

19 September 2014 8:12am

13

Financial acumen is all very well, but this needs to be balanced against the integrity of the organisation and any conflicts of interest and I'd of thought the destruction of the only designated site for nightingale in the country is clearly in conflict with the aims of a Wildlife Trust.



harrywood wild586loris

19 September 2014 10:35am

8

Yes exactly. Conflict of interest.

I currently serve on the board of a charity, and we used to have a situation where a fellow board member had a few (relatively minor) conflicts of interest. It meant he constantly had to be reminded to step out of the meetings at the relevant moments, and this created a lot of acrimony, to the point where board meetings ceased to be functional.

LWT members should welcome this guy into the organisation in some capacity, if he genuinely wants to offer his financial acumen, and a private sector perspective (while being clear about his interests) but they would be foolish to vote him onto the board.

**worksforcommunityorg** harrywood

3

19 September 2014 11:32am

"LWT members should welcome this guy into the organisation in some capacity, if he genuinely wants to offer his financial acumen, and a private sector perspective (while being clear about his interests) but they would be foolish to vote him onto the board."

Agreed, the gentleman has a clear conflict of interest. Nothing wrong with that as long as that conflict is identified and steps are taken to minimise that. If that means that, "board meetings ceased to be functional", then that would need looking at. It is sometimes possible to deal with conflicts of interest, but at times they are too great.

It sounds like it wasn't going for a vote, presumably because there were fewer/the same number of candidates as posts.

[Show 2 more replies](#)

Last reply: 19 September 2014 2:49pm

**mergon**

3

19 September 2014 9:48am

Did you know that Camerons government has sold off the pub land registry ? This means that the frackers ,developers and the like can do what ever they like to our countryside All they have to do is to pay the councils the backhand money and off they go to another million !

**worksforcommunityorg**

6

19 September 2014 11:27am

A trust member who wished to remain anonymous told the Guardian: "... Cadwaladr's sudden desire to help (the trust) does suggest that Land Securities is attempting to influence board level decision-making within the charity."

It certainly looks suspicious.

If Mr Cadwaladr had a genuine interest in the Trust then he would presumably have been doing things for them before now. Has he?

2 PEOPLE, 3 COMMENTS

**MrsSlocombe**

5

19 September 2014 11:55am

I joined the Cornwall Wildlife Trust and am greatly disturbed to see how cosy they are with South West Water, a company responsible for numerous and seemingly needless discharges of sewage through their network of combined sewage overflows in Cornwall and beyond. What ARE they thinking?! I won't renew if they continue on with these cost relationships as its paying lip service to protection and wildlife care. Seems they are being infiltrated by corpos looking to tame valid challenges to their behaviour in the name of profit

**MrsSlocombe** MrsSlocombe

1

19 September 2014 11:56am

Cosy not cost!

**SteB1** MrsSlocombe

5

19 September 2014 10:24pm

Seems they are being infiltrated by corpos looking to tame valid challenges to their behaviour in the name of profit

The problem was until just over 20 years ago most Wildlife Trusts were primarily run by enthusiasts, even those at the very top. So even the most senior people were on modest salaries. That was because it was considered a vocation and not a career. Then in the 1990s the idea began that Wildlife Trusts could do more if they got more funds. So they started taking sponsorship, including unfortunately from oil companies. Companies with an image problem and the environment were only too happy to pay out so they could use it for PR.

Then they idea started that if they attracted professionals, experts in fund raising they could create more income and do more. This meant paying much higher salaries, and employing people that hadn't got a background in conservation, but in fund raising.

Once this model started it grew and they became more like businesses. They employed more business orientated professionals. I was a member of a Wildlife Trust then (not yours). At the time they were very transparent and all members got details of their accounts, staff salaries etc, so I saw it happening. It may not have occurred at the same time everywhere, but it seems all followed this model to some extent.

Unfortunately once an organization adopts this model, it's beholden to raising a lot of funds just to pay it's much higher overheads.

The low point was during the public forestry sell off plans.

Secret "shopping lists" of public woodlands were handed to the government by the National Trust and the Wildlife Trusts before huge public anger halted the proposed sell-off, the Guardian can reveal. The lists were a "betrayal of their members", according to the leading environmentalist Jonathon Porritt, who said the organisations had "rolled over to have their tummies tickled by the government". The same organisations now sit on the independent panel set up in the wake of the fiasco to advise the government on the future of public forests.

<http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2012/jan/11/secret-forest-sell-off-list>

These site's were safe and protected. The only reason these NGOs wanted them was for prestige, in their new business model.

I may be critical of this, but I don't see them as inherently evil. However, I think it was a profound mistake, because once they take this path they can't help but behaving more like businesses just to survive. The more they are lumbered with this business model and behave more like businesses, the more likely they are to have to compromise their principles out of necessity. Whereas if they were run on far lower overheads by enthusiasts on a vocation, the less they would be tempted to compromise those principles.

The article more or less says this.

Elaine Sullivan, chair of the LWT, said later in the day: "Marc has excellent financial skills which could have greatly strengthened the Trust's capabilities and we deeply regret that he has decided to withdraw his nomination to become a trustee. This now leaves a significant skills gap in the board, which we must now seek to address."

I don't think anyone part of a company planning to do something so environmentally damaging is at all suitable to become a trustee of a Wildlife Trust. You have to wonder what the motivation was for wanting this position. At the very least it would appear to be for good PR to mitigate the bad PR.



wallabypoo

20 September 2014 3:48pm

As a former member of staff I'm disappointed. Not surprised, mind.

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