



# Election of Trustees 2024: candidates' statements

This election year there are five vacancies in total: four three-year terms, and one one-year term.

We are particularly interested in Trustees being elected to the Board with experience and skills around: corporate and/or charity fundraising; land management; ecology; public policy; and community engagement.

Ballot papers should be returned to Mi-Voice (Democracy Technology Ltd, First Floor, The Arch Building, Gaters Mill, Mansbridge Road, Swaythling, Southampton SO18 3HW) by 12.30pm on Friday 26 July 2024. Any ballot papers that are sent to the Returning Officer or the John Muir Trust will not be counted.

The Trust is proud of its record of membership participation and we urge all Members to take part in this election. The election is conducted by Single Transferable Vote using Meek's method allowing equal preference. Each Member is eligible to vote. Family Members have two votes; other Members – whether individual, club or corporate – have one vote.

If you have any difficulty registering your vote, please contact the Returning Officer, John Muir Trust, Tower House, Station Road, Pitlochry PH16 5AN or email: [returning.officer@johnmuirtrust.org](mailto:returning.officer@johnmuirtrust.org)

PHOTOGRAPH: BARN OWL (TYTO ALBA) HUNTING © ANDY ROUSE / 2020VISION

The John Muir Trust is a Scottish charitable company limited by guarantee. Charity No. SC002061  
Company No. SC081620 Registered office: Tower House, Station Road, Pitlochry, PH16 5AN

## Contents

### Candidates' statements (in random order)

- 02 Denis Mollison
- 02 John Adams
- 02 Eelco de Jong
- 03 David Farquhar
- 03 Clare Jefferis
- 03 Alison Russell
- 04 Caroline Adam
- 04 Mike Garrett
- 04 Damian Aubrey

**JOHN  
MUIR  
TRUST**



## Denis Mollison

Member since: 1983/84

---

*Nominated by: Susan Hopkinson, Ben Tindall, Sheila Wren, Nigel Hawkins, Elizabeth Luard*

---

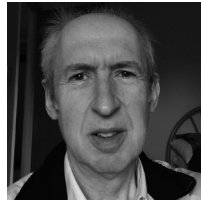
One of the four founders of the Trust. Closely involved over many years in both the ideas and practicalities of the Trust, and in all the Trust's purchases of wild land.

General Secretary and then Chair of the Mountain Bothies Association during 20 years of steady growth. In 2013 took on the Chair of the Hebridean Whale and Dolphin Trust when it was near bankruptcy, and helped it build back to its present flourishing.

That ten Trustees and ten senior staff have resigned over the last 15 months suggests that John Muir Trust has significant governance and operational problems. The Trust has declared a financial crisis that threatens core activities, particularly land management and the John Muir Award. The lack of effective and costed operational plans has hampered fundraising. Our income is too reliant on legacies. Against this background we have spent nearly all our £2.1m reserves for land purchase on 45 acres with an engagement opportunity.

While fresh ideas to keep us relevant in the face of the huge problems of biodiversity loss and climate change are essential, my first priorities would be to stabilise our core activities of land management, policy and engagement, and address the far too high turnover of staff - and of Trustees.

Internally we need a simpler committee structure and better communications among and between Trustees and staff, to give clear and well-informed governance. Externally we need better two-way communication with our Members, donors, the wider public and the communities with whom we share wild land.



## John Adams

Member since: 2017

---

*Nominated by: John Fox-Davies, Kathryn Auckland, Richard Eastmond, John Nolan, Chris Moore*

---

After completing a walk from Kent to Sutherland I visited Sandwood Bay and discovered and then joined the John Muir Trust. I remember reading about Knoydart in the 1980s and have now visited all the main reserves that the Trust conserves. I have read many of John Muir's travel diaries and visited his birthplace. The John Muir Award has inspired me - the thought of inspiring the young in their environmental development is humbling. And protecting the wilderness for the future is a massive privilege and responsibility. I have spent 20 years in Transport Planning including access to National Trail studies. I have done conservation volunteer work for the RSPB, the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, the National Trust, and the Warwickshire Wildlife Trust. I am also a Trustee for a faith community in the West Midlands.

Since my first application for John Muir Trusteeship, I have spent two weeks in Israel & Palestine, looking at environmental and historical centres and assessing conflict resolution possibilities. I am also co-convenor of the Migration group of the Iona community.

For the John Muir Trust, I believe getting back to basics is the way ahead such as consolidating on the John Muir Award, following best practice conservation management both on Trust land, and with any neighbouring community schemes, as well as best management practice. My first degree is in Business Administration and Political studies and I am looking to use that and other experiences and knowledge to enhance the John Muir Trust.



## Eelco de Jong

Member since: 2023

---

*Nominated by: Karen Purvis, Mark Held, Mark Aitken, Clare Jefferis, Jane Smallman*

---

The draw towards wilder places has led me to exchange my home country of the Netherlands for Scotland where I now spend most of my working and leisure time outdoors.

Last September, I was co-opted as Ecology and Natural Heritage specialist for a year. A fascinating time so far but I would like to continue to contribute and therefore I stand as Trustee.

Due to my age I don't have the same professional experience as other trustees but I make up for it in youthful exuberance. I am a trained forest and nature manager and have worked for Forestry and Land Scotland for the last seven years, where I plan and implement land management. I deal with challenges such as climate change, peatland restoration and deer management at a strategic level and have extensive experience liaising with statutory bodies, landowners and charities. I'm furthermore board member of The Highland Weigh, a social enterprise reducing waste by running a zero-waste store and café and I'm an Explorer Scout leader.

My understanding of natural processes through time can prove a great asset to the Trust in demonstrating exemplary management. I believe land management is at the core of the Trust's work and all other objectives derive from it. By demonstrating how land management can and should be done the Trust can define standards, challenge beliefs and push for policy reform far beyond the boundaries of its landholding.

I hope to be elected and continue to support the great work of the Trust.



## David Farquhar

Member since: 2000

*Nominated by: Debbie Farquhar, William Allsop, Eelco de Jong, Carol White, Jennifer White*

I have been a Member of the Trust for around 20 years. I recently retired as CEO of an impact-driven green/clean agritech company [www.igs.farm](http://www.igs.farm), aiming to make a major contribution to the delocalisation and decarbonisation of low-water use, pesticide-free farming. We supported the Trust at Schiehallion and Strathaird. I am now eager to find a new way to lend my experiences and skills to the fight against climate change.

I bring over three decades of experience in building, turning around and financing mainly commercial companies, with a focus on creating positive, winning cultures to drive sustainable growth. I am an investor in a climate-positive venture capital firm, Agfunder. I have an extensive networks of investors from private equity and VC to family offices and high net-worth individuals, as well as wealth managers and companies with a remit to embrace ESG. Such organisations often seek new places to 'invest' profits in support of good causes or impactful E-NGOs like the Trust.

I have already started work supporting David Balharry and Adam Pinder to refresh how the Trust raises capital through a clear, structured approach borrowing best practice from the private sector. David has also asked me to support him in an exciting new development at Kylesku that could significantly raise the Trust's profile with the public, private sector and government as well as fellow NGOs. I can also bring extensive experience of media relations and public affairs at the highest level through engagement with global titles and heads of state/government.



## Clare Jefferis

Member since: 2000

*Nominated by: Chris Loynes, Andy Whitfield, Jane Smallman, Jim Gibson, John Finney*

Why am I standing as Trustee again?

I am keen to help implement the Trust's strategy, following a disruptive and unsettling year. I'd love John Muir Trust to be recognised as the leading voice for wild places; it has the expertise, passion and networks to make a real difference in protecting wild land. As a Trustee I can support and enable the committed staff and Board, to achieve the Trust's charitable objectives.

My love for the outdoors led to me studying geology, thoroughly enjoying fieldwork as student and leader. I was a Senior Field Tutor on Arran, and then a geography teacher. My early career enabled me to kindle a love for the outdoors in my students, following the Trust's priority of connecting people and communities with wild places.

I am a fundraising consultant, working with charities across the UK, helping them write compelling stories to secure funding. I am a member of the Chartered Institute of Fundraising and sit on one of their committees. Holding various volunteer roles within the charity sector, I can bring experience, expertise and contacts from a broad fundraising background to support John Muir Trust.

As a member for 24 years, I am standing as a Trustee, and have sufficient time to dedicate, and the skills and experience to benefit the Trustee Board. As a John Muir Trust Trustee, I would ensure that fundraising is a key component of future strategy.

I am delighted and privileged to be proposed as a trustee.



## Alison Russell

Member since: 2006

*Nominated by: Bob Aitken, Heather Alexander, Keith Griffiths, Will Williams, Sheila Wren*

I'm a lover of wild land and nature with a long-standing commitment to the Trust's work. I've attended many conservation workparties, mostly in Knoydart and the north-east. I moved to the northwest Highlands in 2014 and retired in 2021.

Following the Chair's declaration of a 'financial crisis' and compulsory staff redundancies, I have been deeply concerned about the Trust's financial stability and the potential impact on its charitable activities. I am also troubled by the many resignations of senior staff and trustees over the last 15 months. There are now five elected Trustees, of whom one stands down in 2024 and another's 6-year tenure ends in 2025. This leaves a Trustee cohort with limited historical knowledge of the Trust.

Collective wisdom is vital as it helps to inform change. New ideas will keep the Trust relevant but the Trust must be financially stable and working effectively to implement those ideas. As the Trust's Director of Resources from 2006-13, I worked in partnership with the Chief Executive and closely with the Board for six years. I offer integrity, a co-operative working style, extensive charity and financial planning experience, a robust approach and honesty.

My priorities if elected:

- immediate review of financial management
- detailed 5 year operational & financial plan that puts the Trust on an even keel
- investigate problems behind staff turnover
- review how the Board operates and ensure that good information underpins key decisions and
- work towards a transparent relationship with staff, members, funders, neighbours.





## Caroline Adam

Member since: 2012

---

*Nominated by: Carole Scott, Liz Corbett, John Corbett, Karen Purvis, John Fraser*

---

Growing up in Scotland gave me a lifelong interest in nature, and a love of wild places. Since my early teens I've enjoyed hill walking, wild swimming, hostelling and camping in many different parts of the UK, from the Northern Isles to the south of Cornwall. Travelling in other remote parts of the world, including the Himalayas, Patagonia, and recently Madagascar, has made me increasingly aware of both the abundance and the fragility of all types of life on this precious planet.

I became a member of the John Muir Trust in 2014, and started volunteering a couple of years ago at the Glenlude property in the Scottish Borders – learning about the many practical tasks that underpin the Trust's philosophy and ambitions; and getting an insight into the knowledge, skills and commitment of the staff and volunteers on which the Trust's future depends.

My professional background is in broadcasting, events, communications and management. During more than 20 years with BBC Scotland I worked as producer, presenter, editor, and latterly as a member of the senior management team. Subsequent freelance work involved me in media, arts and community projects as a researcher, fund-raiser and project manager. A further 15 years running a lively independent arts venue developed my skills further in creative leadership, strategic planning, budget management, fund-raising for revenue and capital projects, and dealing with the public on a daily basis.

The John Muir Trust faces many challenges in the years ahead: protecting wild places, improving natural habitats, increasing biodiversity, educating people of all ages and backgrounds about the environment, supporting staff and volunteers to work effectively together, and finding the funds to make all of this possible. I'd like to contribute my own skills, knowledge and enthusiasm to these important tasks.



## Mike Garrett

Member since: 1988

---

*Nominated by: David Bunting, Chris Whitford, Margaret Graham, Jeffrey Banks, Philip Nixon*

---

My background is in IT and software. But I've been involved in managing the Austrian Alpine Club (UK) (AAC(UK)) for over 30 years, with six years as a Board Director, including three years as Vice Chairman, and one year as Acting Chairman. This club/company had 16,000 members and a turnover of £750K pre-Covid. Together this has given me experience in governance, data protection, and IT security.

I've taken part as a volunteer on many John Muir Trust work parties over years, going back as far as Dr Terry Isles and forward to Sandy Maxwell. I've organised work parties by providing AAC (UK) members to do the work, with John Muir Trust providing the tools and a skilled leader (a Trust employee). I facilitated funds from the AAC (UK) to provide a new footbridge on the Strathaird estate in 2001.

UK outdoor activities have included hillwalking, mountaineering, and winter climbing. And abroad alpine mountaineering, cross country skiing, and snow shoeing. With many visits to the mountains in other countries, including first ascents in Greenland. I've completed the Munros and Corbetts.

As a John Muir Trust member continuously since 1988, I've seen the Trust evolve and its influence grow over the years. I'm really keen that the opportunities within Scotland for carbon capture (via reforestation) and carbon retention (as within peat) be fully exploited. Hence stronger control over deer numbers, and management of peat. I'd very much like to contribute to the Trust's existing efforts on these topics.



## Damian Aubrey

Member since: 1995

---

*Nominated by: Richard Eastmond, John Finney, Mark Held, Jim Gibson, Mark Aitken*

---

I first became a member of the John Muir Trust in 1995 when studying at Aberdeen University. I was an active member, and later President, of the university's mountaineering club, during which time I spent most weekends in some of Scotland's wildest places. I became aware of the Trust's work to protect such places and would later write my Masters thesis as a management plan for the Trust's Strathaird Estate.

Since completing a Masters degree in Rural Resource Planning, I have held positions with Scottish Natural Heritage, working towards the designation of the Cairngorms National Park in 2003, and in rural Uganda managing a remote nature reserve. I then worked for over 15 years developing commercial scale onshore wind farms, gaining a thorough understanding of planning policies and procedures.

I have completed several 'thru hikes' of the Pacific Crest Trail, Appalachian Trail and Continental Divide Trail in USA, and the Te Araroa Trail in New Zealand. Each of these involved spending around five months hiking through some of the most pristine wild areas and developing a deep love of wild places, which led me to complete a Masters Degree in Conservation Leadership at the University of Cambridge in 2018.

I offer the Trust significant professional experience of the planning process, experience of immersion in wild land and my passion for its protection. I believe that individuals should be encouraged to experience wild places, since only then will they perceive its intrinsic value and advocate for its protection.