

BRITISH NATURALISTS' ASSOCIATION
The National Body for Naturalists
Founded 1905

Minutes of the 117th AGM of British Naturalists' Association
On Saturday 15th October 2022 at 2.15pm

Held Online via Zoom

The meeting began at: 14.15

The Chairman asked if there was a declaration of interest, - there was none

Present:

Hon. President: Mr. R.K. Tabor.

Members of Council: Ms. E. Beer, Mr. J Curwen, Mr. M.R. Demidecki-Demidowicz, Mr. M. Dudley, Dr. C. Gibson. Mr. S. Rutherford (Chairman), Mr. R.L. Stewart

Officers (other than those officers who are also Members of Council named above): Hon. Website and Publications Editor: Mrs. P. Rutherford

Others:

Catherine Artindale, Nick Austin, June Birchall, Julie Blackmore, Jane Clist, Chris James, Wendy Knowles, John Morrell, Tricia Moxey, Keeley Porter, Brian Sims, David Skydmore

Agenda items:

1. Welcoming remarks.

The Chairman opened the meeting by thanking everyone and welcoming them to the 117th AGM. He commented on how he is enjoying doing AGMs via Zoom as it allows members from all over the country to take part and how nice it is to see everyone joining in.

Mr Steven Rutherford thanked Hon. President Roger Tabor for attending this meeting and asked him if he would like to take the Chair which Roger declined and asked Steve to continue.

The Chairman reminded everyone notification of AGM was sent out with the September 2022 issue of British Naturalist. As indicated, notice of the AGM including details of how to register to attend the meeting and the Agenda, Minutes of the last AGM, proxy voting form, and proxy voting instructions could and still can be viewed on the BNA website.

There have been three proxy votes received from Peter Floyd-Spong, Dr. Jean Panniker and Dr. Richard Panniker

Those members entitled to vote on resolutions at this AGM are: Ordinary Members, Family Members who are at least 18, Honorary Members, Student Members, Life Members, Associate Members (ABNAs), Registered Members (MBNAs), Fellows (FBNAs) and Fellows (honoris causa). Youth Members and Corporate Members are not so qualified.

When voting at this meeting can members keep their hands raised until their vote has been counted, each vote will be decided upon a show of hands (unless a poll is demanded by at least two members).

2. Apologies for Absence.

D. Farrar, P. Floyd-Spong, K. Foster, H. Hardwick, S. Holt, T. Kril, R. McMeachan, J. Panniker, R. Panniker, N. Redgate, L. Spinks, D. Warham

3. Minutes of 116th AGM.

Ordinary resolution: To agree the minutes of the 116th AGM as a fair and reasonable record.

Proposed:
Endymion Beer

Seconded:
Nick Austin

Resolution agreed and passed (with 4 abstentions Chris James, Chris Gibson, Jean and Richard Panniker)

4. Matters Arising.

There were none.

5. Consideration of the report of Council of Management and accounts for the year ended 30 September 2021.

Mr. John Curwen Hon. Treasurer was asked to comment and said that hopefully everyone will have seen from the circulated report, there was a deficit in income of £1575 significantly reduced from the previous year; Council of Management is trying hard to balance the books on an annual basis and reduce the deficit, with various actions taken in the past to do so however this year unfortunately, there is another small deficit similar to last year. But that said we have cash reserves of nearly £100,000. And therefore there are no immediate financial risks to the organisation.

Ordinary resolution: To receive the report of the Council of Management and accounts for the year ended 30 September 2021.

Proposed:
John Curwen

Seconded:
Brian Sims

Resolution agreed and passed (included three proxy votes for, carried unanimously)

6. Independent Examiner's report to the Council of Management for the year ended 30 September 2021.

Ordinary resolution: To receive the Independent Examiner's report to the Council of Management for the year ended 30 September 2021.

Proposed:
John Curwen

Seconded:
John Morrell

Resolution agreed and passed (included three proxy votes for, carried unanimously)

7. Election of Council Members

The members of the present Council of Management are: Mr. J. Curwen, Mr. M.R. Demidecki-Demidowicz; Mr. M. Dudley, Ms. E. Beer, Dr. C.C. Gibson, Ms. S.V.L. Holt, Mr. N. D. Redgate, Mr. S. Rutherford (Chairman), Mr. R. L. Stewart, and Mr. T.J. Thomas.

All have indicated they are eligible and willing to stand again for Council. Council has not recommended that anyone else be elected and no notice of intention to propose any other person for election has been received. This is in accordance with Article 37 of the Articles of Association which are available for anyone who wishes to see them.

Ordinary resolution: To elect to the Council of Management all those retiring members of the Council of Management who have offered themselves for re-election and such others (if any) who may be eligible and have been proposed for election under Article 37 and expressed their willingness to be elected.

Proposed:

Tricia Moxey

Seconded:

Jane Clist

Resolution agreed and passed (included three proxy votes for, carried unanimously)

8. Appointment and remuneration of Independent Examiner.

Ordinary resolution: To leave the decision as to appointment and remuneration of the Independent Examiner to Council.

Proposed:

John Curwen

Seconded:

Chris James

Resolution agreed and passed (included three proxy votes for, carried unanimously)

9. Chairman's concluding remarks and discussion.

It's been a funny old year again as we come through the pandemic, whilst keeping fingers crossed because of a recent spike in Covid numbers. That said, we have been keeping members together via the monthly zoom talks – which I think have been a great success with some fantastic speakers; and thanks to the help of the staff from the Natural History Museum for their input and for letting us hear the scientific side of natural history, giving us an insight into the work going on which many of us are unaware of.

We hope to continue through next year – 2023 with this series of talks, and if anyone is interested in getting involved, please contact me and we can discuss this.

One of the talks in July, was presented by four of our Young Nats the four subjects were – observations on nesting magpies – maintenance of a pond to benefit a frog population – nature watching across the UK – my favourite natural things. I would like to include the YNs in next years series of talks again.

I have been working with Endymion Beer and Pauline Rutherford and a couple of other members, to help promote the YN side of the BNA with some good results, with our young members renewing into 2nd and 3rd year and we currently have 32 BNA members under the age of 24. This is a great start which we want to continue to build on. Brian Sims has been encouraging his branch members to join their young family members, which is a lovely thing to do and thanks to everyone who has been involved in that.

Members in the Norfolk/Suffolk area have started a WhatsApp group – and this is a great way of keeping people in touch and learning through sharing photographs. This idea came from Chris James through Michael Demidecki. Their WhatsApp group has approximately 80 followers. It would be good if we can all help members in other areas to get together by using this tool. Roger Tabor uses Twitter in a similar way.

This next year we are returning to face-to-face National events:

The first will be at the Natural History Museum, London on 22nd April 2023. Encaenia – recognising graded members and giving awards, and a couple of talks. Steph Holt has organised this with exhibits to look at and possible tour around “back rooms” in the NHM.

The second will be a field study and workshop weekend on the 1st & 2nd July 2023 at Brandon Marsh nature reserve (WLT) near Coventry. We hope to have several leading naturalists who can look at the natural history of that area, with activities such as moth trapping, pond dipping, microscopy, bat detecting etc. Details are being put together now and will be available soon.

I would also like to try to visit other areas of the country such as Devon and Cheshire and get a few members to meet together.

Q&A from participants

Chris James asked how many national members there are (John Curwen said there were approximately 350-400) and whether there were any plans to spend the large amount of money in the bank. The Chairman answered by saying it was members’ money which we have to ensure we get value for members from when spending it, and by spending it wisely this will make membership grow. We hope more evidence of how the BNA can use that money to benefit the members will become obvious over the next couple of years.

A way of using some of this money is one project I am looking at with Endymion Beer for our Young Nats to get involved with, connected with weather and how it affects the natural history of their local areas. Endymion has managed to involve Chris Page a young weather forecaster for ITV in East Anglia who has written a lovely article for the next YN Newsletter and he is quite keen to keep in touch to see how the project goes on. He seems to be the right person to help us as he gives talks to schools on weather, clouds etc. I thought some money could be used to buy equipment for this, however perhaps not as much as I initially thought as the owner of my local garden centre who I have a good relationship with, has offered to sponsor this project and give a donation towards the equipment.

Roger Tabor pointed out it is good to have that healthy balance through bequests, as there was far less when he was Chairman; and this money should be used so members can do the natural history things which we are doing. He also commented on how easy it would be to spend this money however, by looking at the ratio of this amount to the size of the BNA it isn’t disproportionate compared to larger organisations such as the RSPB whose assets are vast. We should be spending but at the same time investing in the ways mentioned by promoting membership; and looking at increasing our organisation with ethical funding bodies (such as Heritage Lottery) who can support us. Roger suggested we could use some money to employ someone who can put in a bid for us; this wouldn’t be inappropriate as it would gain money and give us a better profile and enable us to work better.

Thank you everyone for contributing and being part of the 117th AGM.

10. Date and venue of next meeting

To be arranged in due course.

Meeting closed at: 14.50

The address of the registered office of the Association is
27 Old Gloucester Street, London, England, WC1N 3AX.

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