

# 120<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of the British Naturalists' Association

Saturday 31<sup>st</sup> May 2025 at 2.15pm by zoom

## Meeting Started – 14.45

Thank you to Roy for his talk. Steve offered the chair to Roger Tabor who declined, then welcomed everyone to this 120<sup>th</sup> AGM.

When voting please keep your hand up until the votes have been counted.

## Present – Roger Tabor - President

Steven Rutherford – Chair

Pauline Rutherford – Minutes

**Trustees present** – Michael Demidecki-Demidowicz, Mark Dudley, Paul Guymer, Simon Jones, Roy Stewart

## Members present –

Catherine Artindale

Nick Austin

Andy Holtham

Wendy Knowles

Richard and Jean Panniker

Keeley Porter

David and Gill Shearing

David Skydmore

Julie Wise

Jean and Andy Young

## Agenda

### 1. Welcoming remarks.

Welcome to Paul Guymer – new BNA Treasurer from January 2025 from John Curwen, who held the position for over 20 years, which is quite an achievement for someone to volunteer for a registered charity. I would like to thank John personally for his years of service to the BNA. John will remain as a Trustee and will still be helping with our work going forward.

Notification of AGM was sent out with the March 2025 edition of British Naturalist. Notice of this AGM, Agenda, Minutes of the 119<sup>th</sup> AGM, 2024 Report and Accounts, and Proxy voting form, were emailed to members on 9<sup>th</sup> May 2025 and can still be viewed on the BNA website.

We have received 1 Proxy Vote – Helen Brewerton who voted “for” all items.

### 2. Apologies for absence – Dr. Chris Gibson, John Curwen, Endymion Beer, Nigel Woodall, Dianne Farrar, Brian Sims

**Please note:** members entitled to vote on resolutions at this AGM are: paid up Ordinary Members, Family Members who are at least 18, Honorary Members, Student Members, Life Members, Associate Members, Registered Members, Fellows, and Honorary Fellows.

Youth members and corporate members aren't eligible to vote.

**3. Minutes of 119<sup>th</sup> AGM.**

**Ordinary resolution:** To agree the minutes of the 119<sup>th</sup> AGM as a fair and reasonable record.

Proposed – Nick Austin

Seconded – Roy Stewart

All in favour

Resolution agreed and passed

**4. Matters Arising – none**

**5. Consideration of the report of Council of Management and accounts for the year ended 30 September 2024.**

The report and accounts for last year have been available for everyone to see on our website.

John Curwen, who retired as our Honorary Treasurer at the end of last year, can't attend this meeting and has asked me to point out the main points: -

- a) There was a small surplus of £1,311 at the end of the year.  
This was largely due to an increase in donations and an increase in the interest earned from our savings bonds.
- b) The last time we managed to generate a surplus was in 2015 when we benefitted from a substantial legacy.
- c) With regard to the current year, interest rates are falling and our 'day-to-day' costs will continue to rise, so it is likely that we will drop back into deficit again.
- d) That said, we continue to hold substantial cash reserves and can run a small deficit with no immediate financial concerns.

**Ordinary resolution:** To receive the report of the Council of Management and accounts for the year ended 30 September 2024.

Proposed – Paul Guymer

Seconded – Jean Young

All in favour

Resolution agreed and passed

**6. Independent Examiner's report to the Council of Management for the year ended 30 September 2024.**

**Ordinary resolution:** To receive the Independent Examiner's report to the Council of Management for the year ended 30 September 2024.

Proposed – Pauline Rutherford

Seconded – Roger Tabor

All in favour

Resolution agreed and passed

## **7. Election of Council members**

Please note Article 37 of the Articles of Association:

“No person other than a Council member retiring at the meeting shall unless recommended by the Council be eligible for election to the Council at any General Meeting unless, not less than three nor more than twenty-one days before the date set for the meeting, there shall have been left at the registered office of the Association notice in writing signed by a member qualified to attend and vote at the meeting for which such notice is given, of his intention to propose such person for election, and also notice in writing signed by that person of his willingness to be elected.”

The members of the present Council of Management are:

Ms. E. Beer,  
Mr. J. Curwen,  
Mr. M.R. Demidecki-Demidowicz;  
Mr. M. Dudley,  
Dr. C.C. Gibson,  
Mr. P. Guymer,  
Ms. S. Holt,  
Mr. S.R. Jones,  
Mr. S. Rutherford (Chairman),  
Mr. R. L. Stewart.

All have indicated they are eligible and willing to stand again for Council, and no notice of intention to propose any other person for election has been received.

**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.

Proposed – David Shearing

Seconded – Jean Young

All in favour

Resolution agreed and passed

## **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 – Roy Stewart

Seconded – Mark Dudley

All in favour

Resolution agreed and passed

**A.O.B.** – Simon Jones brought up a suggestion for sending out British Naturalist digitally. Several other similar organisations which he is a member of, are going digital and he thought it would be good for the BNA to do this. We won't be voting on it today but I wanted to put the idea to you so you can think about it. The two obvious reasons for this are:- the cost of printing and posting this out to all members, but also because of the carbon emissions in the production of the magazine which makes this a positive thing to do. We aren't thinking of doing this with Country-Side as that is such an important magazine. But the BN is a member's magazine and could be the way forward; therefore, in the next issue of the BN there will be a notification about this with some open for discussion points for you to read. An email will follow this with the ability to respond to whether you wish to receive this digitally rather than a hard copy.

Steve asked if any one had any points they wished to make on this :-

Roger Tabor thought it was a good idea; his only concern was archiving a digital copy given that we are 120 years old. Steve said we have copies of every BN and CS that have been published which is an important archive, and he would hate to lose that.

David Shearing mentioned there would be a point where it wouldn't be viable to print small numbers and it would be uneconomical.

Steve said that is something to look at in the future, and if anyone would like a digital copy of the last issue to see what it looks like just email him and he will send it out.

Roger suggested we could make it one magazine which is longer to incorporate everything. He also said we need a hard copy to send as a legal copy to the British Museum. Pauline said she had already been in touch with ALDL (the Agency for Legal Deposit to Libraries) who have said they can accept digital copies.

Andy Young said they (Worcester Naturalists) went through similar discussion and how they could digitise their newsletter. After discussion they decided to stick with hard copies but they now put all their articles on their website. He thought we should consider having a digital archive alongside the hard archive. So maybe at some point the BNA could digitise all the past issues so they can be kept for the future. Steve agreed and said there is a publishing team headed by Pauline, which includes Dr. Neil Fairley who proof-reads the articles. All of the contributors are producing a very valuable document which is carrying on in the vein which EK Robinson would have wanted. And we need to have it available to more people, so by going down the digital route as mentioned by Andy, it will make it much easier for anyone doing research and wanting to reference anything in the magazines. This sharing of information and documents/articles is a valuable resource to the promotion of the study of natural history.

Roger said he agrees it is the right way to go, if our materials are out there then people can use them and put them to good effect, but going digital carries the risk as does all online work, and when something is in the 'cloud' they're not 'safe' for eternity, when you get people globally playing silly games/wars etc, but then hard copies are at risk from woodworm, mites etc and diversifying our copies and storage facilities makes it safer.

Roger also mentioned AI theft which is an easy way for things to be stolen with some of his books and papers now getting used as models by others "to think how I think, to write how I write". And it's easy for those people to say it's not a breach of copyright because they aren't doing exactly the same but it is in essence, and it is a real concern; for example, something I wrote as Chairman of BNA which went into a historical biological journal has since been stolen because the publication it was in

has been 'got at'. Do we think we should be safe-guarding those journals or does it really matter and can you stop this anyway?

Roy Stewart mentioned most major journals etc are going with 'Open Source'. He thought it'll get even worse, and whereas he agreed with Roger he didn't think it could be stopped.

Roger said if Governments don't make a serious attempt to protect authors and publications, what can we do?

## **9. Chairman's concluding remarks and discussion.**

### **Past, Present and Future**

Thank you to the teams who keep the BNA growing and functioning as they do. The Trustees work very hard and thank you to them all for their help and support at the trustees' meetings. Thank you Pauline and Dr. Neil Fairley who I mentioned earlier is the proof reader and helps to bring the publications up to a high standard.

David Swales has stepped down from compiling the News Bulletin but he will help Roy to produce one each year to cover a book and product reviews special later on this year.

### **Past**

Since the last AGM until now

2 C-S and 2 BN, 4 Nature Gazettes (this is the newsletter for Young Naturalists) produced by Endymion and her team. The percentage of YNs/Students is now 14% of the member base- this is a phenomenal achievement compared with other organisations such as WLT and RSPB. If anyone wants to see a copy of the Nature Gazette do get in touch and I will send it to you. There are about 4-5 regular contributors and a few secondary contributors. Steve thanked Endymion and her team for continuing to produce this, it is available on line on the Publications page on the website page with an example on the YN page too. Simon asked if there was a hard copy of this for archive and Steve asked him to mention it at the next Trustees meeting.

Events –

3<sup>rd</sup> August 2024 – BNA Field Day at Gilbert White's House and garden in Selborne led by Steph Holt. Chris Gibson, June Chatfield and others were there and we produced a huge species list. So thank you to Steph for organising that.

5<sup>th</sup> October 2024 – National Encaenia at Natural History Museum, London which works really well. It's a lovely venue and great to go around with Steph and other members of NHM staff. This last Encaenia we spent time in the newly renovated gardens too. We had a brilliant talk from Neil Garrick-Maidment on Seahorses, and another from Ed Baker from NHM on the gardens.

Young Nat's project last year was Bees and Butterflies. Each YN was given ID charts for both species groups and asked to record in their gardens – how many they saw,

what flowers they liked etc. They received a badge for taking part, which is part of the badge recognition scheme where they can collect different badges.

Students WhatsApp group. Thank you to Steph, Pauline, Roy, David, Chris and Endymion who all contribute by helping with IDs, and discussions. Chris does a regular blog from his travels. This helps to keep them as naturalists together and gives them a focus, which is so important.

### **Present**

The next Young Nats project is – Create a Habitat. They can do it at home, school etc, and it's a bit more than just building a bug hotel, as they will have to observe, record and report it. So we want them to get involved in the science aspect of the project. Endymion is leading that, she came up with all the ideas etc.

Booking for the Beth Chatto weekend (16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> August) if you haven't heard of these gardens look them up, its an amazing place. Bookings are through EventBrite with details available on the website. Speakers will be Roger, Ted Benton (bees, butterflies and dragonflies) and Tim Gardiner (grasshoppers, glow worms). The gardens don't have a species list yet and it'll be good for us to record and give them the list.

NHM for the Encaenia (13<sup>th</sup> September) please try to get down it's a wonderful day. It's a chance to get together and chat, with each other.

### **Future**

To help develop BNA events it would be great to build a team that can take this forward, teams who can help with things like fund raising, membership, or events. If anyone thinks they can help please get in touch with me. The idea of working in teams is much better than one person on their own.

Thank you to everyone who has attended and has supported the BNA (we're a big family) and to Roger, the President of BNA.

**Date and venue of next meeting.** To be arranged at a later date.

**Meeting Ended – 15.30**