

## **Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at Jurys Inn Cheltenham, Cheltenham on Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> November 2017**

### **Present**

218 members were recorded as present.

### **Chair's introductory remarks**

Jim Asher, Chair of Butterfly Conservation welcomed everyone to the AGM. He gave thanks to the Gloucester Branch Committee, Charlotte Davidson and the staff from Head Office for the continued success with organising the event.

The Chair explained that before lunch, awards would be presented to this year's Outstanding Volunteers and that members would be able to enjoy talks on conservation topics. The first talk would be by Douglas Boyes, on butterfly and moth recording in Montgomeryshire and the second by Anthony McCluskey, BC's Urban Butterfly Project Officer in Scotland, on 'Volunteer Development in Scotland'. George Tordoff, BC's Monitoring Ecologist for Wales, would begin after lunch with a talk on 'Rare Moths of the England-Wales Borderlands', followed by Jenny Plackett, BC's Senior Regional Officer for the South West, on 'Saving Fritillaries in the South West'. The drawing of the Branch Raffle would precede the presentation of the Marsh Awards then lastly, Professor Dave Goulson, Author of A Sting in the Tale, A Buzz in the Meadow, and Bee Quest, would conclude the afternoon's talks with a talk on 'Pollinator Declines and Pesticides'.

The Chair then opened the formal AGM.

### **1 Apologies**

Apologies had been received from Trustee Sue Foden, and members Nick Bowles, Martyn Davies, Brigitte and Lawrie DeWhalley, William Ellison, Ian Small, Corinna Wiltshire, Neil Hulme, Paul Kirkland and Martin Warren.

### **2 Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at The Nottingham Belfry, Nottingham on Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> November 2016**

The Minutes of the meeting had been published on the website and made available on request. They were proposed by Andrew Brown and seconded by Roger Dobbs, and approved.

### **3 Matter Arising**

The Chair asked all present if there were any matters arising to discuss. Nothing was raised.

### **4 Annual Report - Chair's Report to Members**

The Chair began by announcing he had an additional item to cover and proceeded to give a tribute to Dr Stephen Jeffcoate, ex-Chair of BC, who sadly passed away on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017 on the Isle of Man.

The Chair then began his formal report by saying he will focus on outlining the challenges faced in delivering BC's core strategy and how, by working together, we can make a difference.

The Chair described how he has had the personal pleasure of meeting volunteers in all four countries of the UK in what was another action-packed year for BC.

The UK's butterflies and moths still remain under threat however, and BC's massive data sets clearly tell us that two-thirds of these species are in decline. Success can be demonstrated in improving the status of our most threatened species by focusing conservation on semi-natural habitats at a landscape scale.

The Chair then highlighted some of BC's recent achievements:

- In Heddon Valley, Exmoor, UK's most threatened species, High Brown Fritillary, is bucking the trend, with >600% increase between 2002 and 2016 and is now on a new site;
- Work by volunteers and contractors on 49 sites across West Midlands has increased Small Blue populations from three in 2009 to 19 by 2016;
- Management work at Strensall Common, Yorkshire, to reverse a 90% decline of Dark-bordered Beauty moth over a decade now shows 2016 numbers are the highest since 2011, an eight fold increase;
- The major Back from the Brink project is now up and running – jointly with our partner species non-governmental organisations.

The Chair continued that widespread species are also under threat and show alarming falls in numbers. Better space for nature needs to be encouraged in agricultural and developed landscapes to create more havens for wildlife and for people to reconnect with nature locally.

BC has a number of projects directed at these needs including Plant Pot for Pollinators, Garden Butterfly Survey and Moth Night.

Jim also spoke about the Big Butterfly Count which this year achieved the highest outreach to date – over 62,500 counts and over 550,000 individual butterflies recorded. Examples of positive feedback from participants were shown.

The Chair continued that BC wants to inspire people to understand and deliver species conservation. More needs to be done to convince people that attention to nature will not only improve the health of insects but will pay dividends for their physical and mental well-being.

BC's message is spreading and is reaching out to more people through social media, press coverage and citizen science, however, the message needs to reach everyone, especially young people as the future of the planet will be in their hands.

The Chair then announced the following:

- This time last year, BC's membership had reached 30,001, and he was delighted to announce that it now stands at the magnificent figure of 33,619.
- During the year, across UK, BC's volunteers are doing a fabulous job and we want to go still further.

- In Northern Ireland, Butterfly Files is developing and building volunteer capacity with funding from Heritage Lottery Fund and BC aims to do more of that across the rest of the UK.

The Chair continued by saying more must be done to convince those with the power to influence the management of UK landscapes, such as national law-makers, local government and major landowners. BC has five Species Champions at Westminster, in addition to 10 Scottish MSPs and three Welsh Assembly Members.

The Chair said that at a time of Brexit talks, there is a huge risk that legislation to protect the environment and wildlife will slip through the net. BC needs to strengthen its advocacy on these issues and work with partner organisations to safeguard natural heritage.

The Chair advised that BC's fourth core objective is to promote international conservation actions. Wildlife generally, and butterflies and moths in particular are under massive threat all over the planet. BC knows the problems that extend across Europe and further afield. BC's resources are limited and its main focus is on the clear and present risks to UK butterflies and moths. However, methodologies for monitoring, developed in the UK, are disseminated across the world. Others follow BC's example of a science - and evidence - based approach to insect conservation and BC is the envy of the world for what they do.

BC works with partners across Europe, through BC Europe which was co-founded in 2004. The European Butterfly Monitoring Scheme continues to produce data and reports and BC support projects on the ground through the volunteer-run European Interests Group. BC also works with partners in the Republic of Ireland on all-Ireland projects.

BC encourages the dissemination of conservation science through the long series of international conferences, the last in 2014, which attracts many overseas participants. The next will be in April 2018 – BC's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary year.

The Chair announced that another major milestone was reached this year when Council unanimously confirmed the appointment of Julie Williams as Chief Executive.

The Chair concluded by offering further thanks to:

- BC's Trustees on Council for all their work this year;
- Julie Williams and her staff team for delivering a great job for BC;
- BC's financial supporters and partners;
- Especially to members, volunteers and the Branches for their truly massive contribution to the impact BC makes. Keep up the great work and make a difference!

## **5 Treasurer's report to members and adoption of the Annual Report & Consolidated Accounts and Balance Sheet for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017**

The Treasurer, David Hanson, announced that this was his last report to a BC AGM as Treasurer due to his retirement from Council next year.

David began by giving his own thanks to former Chair, Stephen Jeffcoate, and stated how privileged he was to deliver a tribute to Stephen on behalf of BC at his funeral in April.

The Treasurer explained that BC had a good year. Income from subscriptions and related Gift Aid was up by 17%, on top of a 15% increase the year before.

The Treasurer advised that for several years now BC has accepted, and acted on, the realisation that BC has to be more self-reliant, more reliant on income generated from within the BC family because the support forthcoming from statutory sources is under huge pressure.

More members equate to more income and BC's members have been extremely generous in responding to MatchPot appeals. Last year saw the highest number of legacies, 25, which produced an income of £438,000, which was up by nearly 40% on the previous year.

David confirmed that all of the financial support received by BC has kept the total annual expenditure at £3.5million, of which £3million is spent on Conservation.

The Treasurer announced that without a doubt, the even greater contribution made by BC's members and supporters is through their volunteering. Over £11million-worth in money terms. Without that input BC's impact would be a fraction of what it is.

David said he would like to record Council's thanks to BC's Finance Team for all their work. Council can rely on absolutely rock solid financial reporting, backed up by another completely clean audit report, plus an intelligent commentary on the messages those numbers offer.

The Treasurer advised that fundraising is a major challenge every year in order to sustain, and hopefully increase, the £3million spent on conservation activities. BC has recently received over £1million from Heritage Lottery Fund for the Back from the Brink project.

In 2016/17 a record total of over £4million was secured for spending over the following 4 years.

BC fundraises across the board from Statutory Agencies to Lottery Funds, from Landfill Tax Schemes to Charitable Trusts and, at an individual level, from Crowdfunding to Raffles, from Appeals to Legacies. BC continually reviews the scope of the opportunity in each channel and the return obtained from the effort required.

David confirmed that the past year has seen the introduction of the Fundraising Preference Service and May 2018 sees the arrival of the General Data Protection Regulation, which is an EU data protection regulation with major ramifications for fundraising.

David stated that the challenges remain, and probably always will, but the BC staff response across the board, not just in Fundraising and Finance, is inspirational.

The Treasurer summarised by looking back over the 10 difficult years since the start of the financial crisis, to see how well BC has coped with all the challenges faced:

- Staff numbers risen by 40%;
- Annual expenditure risen by 75% from £2million to £3.5million;
- Estimated value of volunteering effort risen by 120% to £11million;
- Membership raised by 166% from 12,662 to 33,619.

The Treasurer finished his report by thanking everyone for their support and for the huge pleasure it has been to work with such a dedicated and resourceful team of staff, trustees and members, who together have achieved this remarkable record. David is confident that

these characteristics will continue to be evident under the leadership of BC's new Chief Executive and that the challenges of the next 10 years will be mastered just as well.

The Honorary Treasurer proposed the adoption of the Annual Report and Accounts, which was seconded by Kathryn Dawson. The Annual Report and Accounts were unanimously approved by the members.

## **6 Appointment of Auditors and authorisation to fix their remuneration for the coming year**

Nigel Symington proposed the reappointment of Buzzacott LLP with Karen Goldie-Morrison seconding this. The appointment was approved and Council was authorised to fix their remuneration for the ensuing year.

## **7 Chief Executive Officer's (CEO) Report**

Julie Williams began by saying what a huge honour it was to be here as the new Chief Executive to talk about BC's achievements and plans for the coming year.

The CEO added her own personal tribute to Stephen Jeffcoate who she first had the pleasure of meeting at her interview over 17 years ago, and who played a huge part in her career at BC. Stephen will always be a significant part of BC's history.

The CEO continued by reiterating some of the conservation successes in 2016/17, including the Large Blue butterfly reaching its highest ever numbers for 80 years and BC securing £4.4million for current and future work. In an increasingly difficult climate for fundraising BC is very grateful to all the funders for their support.

The CEO advised that much of the income secured was for threatened species work, including funding for the Large Blue and Brown Hairstreak butterflies in the Poldens, the Drab Looper moth and Duke of Burgundy butterfly along the South Downs Way and a cross border project that will benefit the Marsh Fritillary butterfly in Northern Ireland, Ireland and Western Scotland.

BC's recording schemes, which collate records from tens of thousands of volunteers, continue to be the bedrock of BC's conservation and science work. The UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme celebrated its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2016. Since the scheme began a remarkable 28million butterflies have been counted during 400,000 visits to 4,500 sites. BC's data sets are world renowned and to date BC hold in trust over 60million records.

Julie announced that over the past year BC has developed a new conservation strategy which identifies 26 butterfly and 103 moth species which are the highest priority for action across the UK. A key component of the strategy is the country and English regional action plans which staff and volunteers have been developing together. This will be available on BC's website shortly.

BC's new conservation strategy and recent State of Butterfly report emphasises the need for BC to increase its research and policy work particularly for the widespread but declining species.

BC has developed an Urban Butterfly Indicator and hope that Defra will adopt this as an official indicator of the state of the environment.

The CEO stated that BC is extremely excited about the new Building Sites for Butterflies project which will harness opportunities and allow BC to galvanise support of landscape and engineering industries to implement changes to ensure habitat creation for invertebrates.

The CEO explained that there is increasing evidence that access to natural green spaces improves people's physical and mental health. Nature offers an effective Natural Health Service but approximately 80% of us now live in urban areas. BC's innovative Urban Butterfly Project in Scotland has the twin aims of enhancing urban habitats for butterflies and moths, and encourages urban dwellers to record them. Early surveys show that new recorders are citing various benefits to their health and wellbeing.

The CEO also stated that BC is currently developing a new project in London to improve its green space for Lepidoptera.

Julie mentioned that during 2016/17 BC's scientists continued to gather evidence on the status of butterflies and moths and published over 15 high quality scientific papers including a study on the impacts of climate change on national biodiversity population trends. In collaboration with the University of Stirling and Sussex, BC published a paper highlighting the correlation between the use of neonicotinoid pesticides and the decline of widespread species. BC was delighted that Michael Gove, the Environment Secretary, revealed the UK will back a total ban on these insect-harming pesticides across Europe.

The CEO said BC intends to increase its research work to improve its evidence base and the impact of its conservation work through expanding BC's work with partners in universities and research institutes.

The CEO continued that for the last four years, seven species non-government organisations have been working together. The group has been sharing knowledge and expertise on nature reserves and the use of GIS data. They have also developed a farmland toolkit to encourage farmers to provide for wildlife. BC will continue to work with the group, formally named Rethink Nature, as partners to promote the importance of species conservation.

The CEO stated that it is estimated 80% of environmental policies in the UK are currently shaped by EU law, including key rules protecting some of our rarest and most vulnerable species and habitats. BC is working with Greener UK, and the UK Link groups and through Rethink Nature to ensure the existing levels of environmental protection and enforcement are maintained or strengthened as we leave the EU. Through these groups BC is working to ensure the government's 25 Year Plan for Nature is ambitious and delivers positive outcomes for the environment.

The CEO explained that during the year BC launched a new education project, Munching Caterpillars goes to Town, with the Somerset and Bristol Branch. This project has reached over 3,000 children in its first year, across 19 schools and 17 community and public events, by attending hands on workshops or visiting the pop up caterpillar café giving children that first all-important encounter with a caterpillar that might just start a lifelong connection to nature. BC are rolling out the Munching Caterpillar work in Winchester and have plans to develop similar projects in Scotland and other parts of the UK.

The CEO stated that BC's reach and engagement is bigger than it has ever been with significant growth across all social media platforms. Over 60,000 people took part this year in the Big Butterfly Count, BC's highest ever participation. The CEO thanked Kerry Staddon and Andrew Cooper from BC's Media Team for all their work leading BC's digital media.

BC is making a difference. Its work is turning around the fate of the UK's butterflies and moths. BC's contribution to leading world class research using its amazing datasets gives us unique strengths as an organisation, and its engagement with governments and other wildlife organisations is enhanced by this evidenced based approach.

The CEO said that BC continues to educate all ages as to why they should care and what they can do to help.

Julie continued that none of this vital work would take place without the support and dedication of BC's members and volunteers. In 2016/17 BC raised over £820,000 in membership subscriptions alone and volunteers contributed over 175,000 days of vital effort. The CEO expressed her sincere thanks for all the subscriptions and donations received and to every volunteer who gave up their time to make a real difference to our butterflies and moths and the places they live and thrive in.

The CEO stated that volunteers are at the heart of BC's work, allowing BC to make far more impact and sustain projects in a way that staff cannot do alone. With this in mind, BC is developing a UK wide project to build volunteer capacity and increase support for our volunteer network which will hopefully start in 2019 subject to secured funding.

Julie concluded by expressing a huge thank you to the Branch committee members as well as her colleagues at BC, mainly Nigel Bourn and Sam Ellis, for all their hard work and dedication.

The CEO continued that 2018 is BC's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary year and BC has some truly inspiring success stories to be proud of. As we enter this special year, BC has ambitious plans to deliver its 2025 strategy.

Julie finished her report by saying that BC, together with all its members and volunteers, is the champion of the UK's most beautiful insects and next year shall continue to ensure to do everything in its power to conserve the most threatened species, to increase its research work, to continue to raise awareness of how people can help halt the decline of widespread species and connecting more young people with nature.

## **8 Council Elections**

Dr Andy Barker, Roger Dobbs, Dr Susan Foden, Sue Smith and Nigel Symington stood down by rotation, but all were entitled and willing to offer themselves for re-election. As there were sufficient vacancies, the election of all five candidates was proposed by Ilija Vukomanovic and seconded by Chris Winnick. After checking that no member present objected to the election being carried out en bloc, they were approved by a unanimous show of hands.

Dr Andy Barker, Roger Dobbs, Dr Susan Foden, Sue Smith and Nigel Symington were declared to have been duly elected as Trustees.

## **9 Q & A**

The Chair announced that Richard Heafield, BC's Senior Insight Officer, is keen to hear your views on what you think BC does, as well as your interests and what you would like to see BC doing. BC would like to do its best to understand what you want from your membership. Please do ask Richard any questions you have.

**Q: Why do Wildlife Trusts miss out on being involved in the kind of organisations mentioned?**

The Chair answered that the organisations that got together are the ones that are focused entirely on species conservation. Rethink Nature is the first example of this kind. In the future it would be good to see other organisations involved. The Chair also stated that many of BC's Branches are already working closely with Wildlife Trusts.

The CEO advised that Rethink Nature works closely with a number of Wildlife Trusts, but on this project it agreed to remain with species conservation trusts. It is likely Rethink Nature will look at working with Wildlife Trusts more in the future.

**Q: There appears to be a divide between butterfly people and moth people? There is a lack of records for day flying moths and why is that? (This is more of an observation rather than a question).**

Andy Barker (AB) answered by agreeing there needs to be more records of day flying moths. For some reason, and nobody seems to know why, not everyone is recording them. AB urged people to please record day flying moths so that we can start to keep annual indices.

**Q: On the recent edition of *Butterfly* magazine was a large image of a Garden Tiger moth. Is the name right?**

The Chair agreed that was a point well made. The Chair also stated that it has been debated several times over the years as to whether the charity name should include moths, but as yet, it has not been possible to find a simple way of fitting this into the title.

The question and answer session was followed by a two minute silence for Armistice Day.

**Date of Next AGM**

The date of the next AGM will be Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> November 2018, which will be followed by a gala dinner in the evening to celebrate BC's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The venue is yet to be finalised.

The AGM was then formally closed.

Signed by the Chairman..... Date.....