

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at The Nottingham Belfry Hotel, Nottingham on Saturday 10th November 2018.

Present

214 members were recorded as present.

Chair's introductory remarks

Jim Asher, Chair of Butterfly Conservation welcomed everyone to the AGM held during BC's 50th anniversary year. He gave thanks to the East Midlands 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 Dr Callum Macgregor on 'The dark side of street lighting: how night-time pollination is important and under threat', and the second by Dr Caroline Bulman, BC's Head of Species Conservation, on 'Why we work at the landscape-scale to save butterflies and moths'. Russel Hobson, BC's Director of Policy and Land Use, would begin after lunch with a talk on '50 years of moth conservation', followed by Dr Andy Barker, BC Trustee, on 'Magdalen Hill Down – the making of a nature reserve'. The drawing of the Branch Raffle would precede the presentation of the Marsh Awards then lastly, Professor Jeremy Thomas OBE, Emeritus Professor of Ecology & Fellow of New College, Oxford, would conclude the afternoon's talks with a talk on '50 years' research-based conservation of butterflies'.

The Chair then opened the formal AGM.

1 Apologies

Apologies had been received from members Bill Bacon, David Dennis, Dr Jo Havenhand, Lin and Roy Neeve and Tony Hoare.

2 Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at Jurys Inn Cheltenham in Cheltenham on Saturday 11th November 2017

The Minutes of the meeting had been published on the website and made available on request. The minutes were proposed by Mike Dean and seconded by Andrew Brown, 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 looking back over the last 50 years of BC and the many changes in the world since 1968.

The Chair proceeded to give thanks to all of BC's volunteers across the UK for their efforts over the last 25 years that has resulted in a huge and growing data set of detailed butterfly and moth records.

The Chair confirmed that BC's membership now stands at 37,166, compared to 33,619 this time last year.

The Chair reiterated BC's four core aims and continued to highlight some of BC's recent achievements:

- the reintroduction of the Chequered Skipper to Rockingham Forest began with the successful release of butterflies collected the previous day from Belgium;
- a major Moth Atlas will be published next Spring providing an integrated database of moth records. A pre-publication offer for members is available for orders;
- an electronic Science newsletter was launched at the end of March, with the second edition issued in September. Sign up for this newsletter is via BC's website;
- a new project, Building Sites for Butterflies is now up and running which looks to create better habitats along major new road schemes and other industrial infrastructure sites.

The Chair advised that Sir David Attenborough again launched the Big Butterfly Count in July. Sir David confirmed this was his last year launching the event and the Chair gave thanks to Sir David for his generous time and support over the last nine years. This summer the campaign engaged over 100,000 people and nearly 1 million butterflies and moths were counted.

The Chair continued that BC's core aims are ambitious and we are fighting a time of long-term species decline. BC aims to do more to inspire people in urban areas and with our new project, Big City Butterflies, plans to engage more with young people.

BC's eighth International Symposium on Lepidoptera Conservation in April was a great success and was attended by 210 delegates from 24 countries around the world.

BC is determined to make a difference and has been working hard to raise much needed funds. For example, a successful online and live auction, held in September, raised over £10,000.

The Chair gave thanks to all the generous donations received which makes a huge difference to the work BC undertakes.

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 31st March 2018

BC's new Treasurer, Nigel Symington, began by giving thanks to David Hanson for his support and assistance in handing over the position of Treasurer over the last 12 months.

Nigel advised that BC had a very successful year. Revenue was up to its highest ever income of £4.1million. Within this figure, membership income, including Gift Aid, was up by 11%. General funds received an increase of £207,000 and restricted funds increased to £1.6million. A record £3.4million was spent on conservation work.

Nigel said he would like to record Council's thanks to BC's Finance Team, now headed by Sam Taylor, for all their hard work. The team received another completely clean audit report and Finance's record keeping and controls are in excellent shape.

The Treasurer advised that the book-keeping work for all Branches was transferred to Head Office this year which enabled a consistent approach resulting in a saving of 12 days of work in preparing for the annual audit. There has been no impact on the Branches' autonomy and responsibility for their own funds.

The Treasurer said that the external funding environment has become more challenging and funding from this source has hardly increased over the last 10 years. There are two key issues that affect this stream of funding, firstly Brexit and the substantial uncertainty surrounding the possible outcome, and secondly, the largest external funder, Heritage Lottery Fund, will not be awarding further grants from August 2018 for a while.

Income growth has come mainly from internal funding, but this also faces challenges. The introduction of the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) in May means that BC is no longer allowed to contact members to ask for support for conservation work or projects, without specific consent from each member to do so. To give consent, please contact the Membership Team at Head Office.

Nigel stated that this emphasises how vitally important the contributions from BC's members and supporters is and will become more so in the future. Growth of membership is essential in order for BC to fulfil its long-term 2025 strategy. BC aims for an annual increase of at least 10%, and the latest figure for this year so far, is 10.6%.

The Treasurer announced that if BC had to pay for the time given by the amazing volunteers this would be valued at an estimated £11million and would represent BC's largest single stream of revenue with over 170,000 days of volunteer effort, which is a unique benefit for BC.

The Treasurer summarised that BC has had a very successful year with a strong team, consisting of Council, staff and volunteers, who work effectively together to face future challenges.

The Treasurer finally thanked all of BC's members for their outstanding support in BC's 50th anniversary year.

The Honorary Treasurer proposed the adoption of the Annual Report and Accounts, which was seconded by Michael Johnston. 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 Ilija Vukomanovic 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 welcoming everyone to the AGM in BC's special anniversary year and reflected back over the last 50 years.

The CEO announced that BC's impact over the last 50 years has been huge, with over 37,000 members, 32 branches, 170,000 days of volunteer effort per year, 92 staff and over 100,000 citizen scientists taking part in the Big Butterfly Count, all implementing BC's conservation work.

The CEO continued by outlining six key areas which will assist BC in achieving its core aims over the next few years:

- research
- data
- connecting people to nature
- volunteers
- staff
- funding

The CEO announced that BC is currently working on a new Science & Research Strategy which will assist in shaping BC's future plans. This Strategy should be ready in Spring next year.

Julie confirmed that the Butterflies for the New Millennium and the National Moth Recording Scheme collectively hold over 37 million distribution records dating back to the 1600s. BC also monitors data from over 2,000 sites across the UK as part of the Butterfly Monitoring Scheme. BC's data infrastructure needs to be updated to ensure more strategic working and critical improvements need to be made to ensure that data are used to greater effect.

The CEO stated that a Natural England report highlighted the inequality in access to the natural environment with only 50% of people visiting a green space weekly. BC is developing new projects specifically within urban areas to assist people feeling connected to nature. As well as Building Sites for Butterflies and the Urban Butterfly Project in Scotland, BC's pioneering Big City Butterflies project will help Londoners discover butterflies and moths. BC's Munching Caterpillars education scheme currently runs four projects with plans to extend further.

The CEO advised that volunteers are amongst the greatest assets BC has and they are at the heart of BC's work. BC is developing projects around the UK to build volunteer capacity and fundraising for this work has already begun.

BC's staff, another great asset, has seen a large growth and the staff team now totals 92. The CEO said that it was important to ensure that new posts are not always based in Dorset, where possible, and 22 newly recruited members of staff have not been based in Dorset. This included 14 conservation staff, with only three based at Head Office.

The CEO stated that a new Fundraising Strategy is being developed and will be finished by March 2019 setting out plans as to how BC can diversify income streams and be more resilient against statutory funding cuts as well as the uncertainty of Brexit.

The CEO advised that BC needs to evaluate its impact in a positive way and time will be spent developing the best way to do this. BC must be able to demonstrate the difference it makes to remain competitive to funders.

The CEO confirmed that BC's purpose remains unchanged from 50 years ago, but BC needs to adapt to the changing world to continue to achieve this. BC continues to invest in science and research work, manage land in priority landscapes and support people to get out and take action for wildlife.

Julie concluded by giving thanks to David Hanson, and his wife Gill, for their dedication and passion to BC.

Julie also thanked all of BC's wonderful volunteers for their tireless work throughout the year and to all of BC staff and Trustees for their continued support.

Julie finished her report by thanking all of BC's members and supporters. In the last financial year their subscriptions, donations and legacies accounted for 47% of BC's total income. Without their vital support, BC's conservation work would not be possible.

8 Council Elections

Julie Williams, as Returning Officer, announced the results of the 2018 trustee elections.

The Returning Officer confirmed there were six vacant trustee seats.

A total of 32,352 ballot papers were posted out to all eligible members over the age of 18. 2,883 ballot papers were returned. Of these papers, 21 were declared VOID. 2,862 valid ballot papers were counted resulting in 15,251 valid votes.

The results of the election were (*in alphabetical order by surname*):

- Fiona Barclay 1,914 votes
- Apithanny Bourne 2,087 votes
- Michael Dean 1,342 votes
- John Feltwell 908 votes
- David Field 1,014 votes
- Colin Gibbs 999 votes
- Laurence Harwood 705 votes
- Malcolm Plant 928 votes
- Simon Saville 1,203 votes
- John Sumpter 889 votes
- Ilija Vukomanovic 1,650 votes
- Chris Winnick 1,612 votes

The Returning Officer confirmed the six candidates elected as trustees by the members are:

- Fiona Barclay
- Apithanny Bourne
- Michael Dean
- Simon Saville
- Ilija Vukomanovic
- Chris Winnick

The appointment of all six candidates was proposed by Roger Dobbs and seconded by Karen Goldie-Morrison. After checking that no member present objected to the election being carried out en-bloc, the six candidates elected by members were appointed/re-appointed as trustees by a unanimous show of hands.

9 Q & A

Q: Work is being done to involve more children in the organisation in the future, but are there any plans to involve ethnic minorities? [Simon Mold, East Midland Branch]

The Chair replied that this is an issue and one of the aims of the Big City Butterflies project is to connect with urban areas.

The CEO replied that a key aim is to create diversity in urban areas but further development is required. BC does have plans to cover this but it will take time.

Q: One of BC's core aims centres around education, but are there more formal plans in place for increased funding to achieve more? [Clive Wood, Hampshire & Isle of Wight Branch]

The Chair answered that there are plans to do this.

The CEO stated that this is a major programme of work and BC is looking at a number of funders and ways of increasing unrestricted funds for use in this area.

Q: One aim of BC is to increase its international work. Europe is usually mentioned, but what is not largely known about is the rapid decline of butterflies in the tropics, such as Ghana and Costa Rica, and this is never discussed. [Simon Spencer, European Butterflies Group]

The Chair said that he had referred to this at last year's AGM. This is planned to be part of BC's International Strategy but more resources are required.

The CEO advised that from April 2019 Sam Ellis will move to become BC's Director of International. Part of his role will be to write and develop the International Strategy and to obtain funds to implement it. The Strategy will cover the rest of the world as well as Europe and further reports on this work will be available next year.

Closing Remarks

The Chair thanked Sue Smith, who had stood down as a Trustee, for her support during her tenure.

The Chair also gave thanks to David Hanson who retired as BC's Treasurer in July. David was awarded a certificate confirming him as a BC Vice President.

Date of Next AGM

The date of the next AGM will be Saturday 16th November 2019. The venue is yet to be finalised.

The AGM was then formally closed.

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