

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at the Albrighton Hall Hotel, Shrewsbury on Saturday 16th November 2019.

Present

176 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 West Midlands Branch Committee, and Sarah Adlem, Vikki Webb 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 Peter Eeles on the 'Life Cycles of British and Irish Butterflies', and the second by Dr Dan Hoare, BC's Director of UK Conservation, in a change to the advertised programme, on 'Volunteers and Landscape-scale Projects'. Stephen Lewis, the Prees Heath Common Reserve Warden, would begin after lunch with a talk on 'The Restoration of Prees Heath Common Reserve and the Silver-studded Blue', followed by Martin Davies from European Butterflies Group on 'Fields of Gold – Europe's threatened butterflies and the case of the Danube Clouded Yellow'. The presentation of the Marsh Christian Trust Awards would precede the drawing of the Branch Raffle, then lastly, Penny Metal, insect photographer and author of *Insectinside: Life in the Bushes of a Small Peckham Park* would conclude the afternoon's talks with a talk on 'Not another Poplar Hawk-moth! Looking for the big moths'.

The Chair then opened the formal AGM.

1 Apologies

Apologies had been received from Trustees: Apithanny Bourne and Michael Johnston, and from members: Lynsey Anderson, Gill Burgess, Ken Burgess, John Burton, Sally Gillard, Roy Neeve, Lee Westmoreland, Jax Westmoreland and Mike Williams.

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

The Minutes of the meeting had been published on the website and made available on request. Acceptance of the minutes was proposed by Andrew Brown and seconded by Mike Dean, and approved by those present.

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 at BC's achievements over the last year and highlights included:

- the successful emergence of the Chequered Skipper butterflies in 2019 from stock collected in Belgium and released in 2018 as part of the Back from the Brink project;
- the Building Sites for Butterflies project has begun to make an impact on infrastructure landscapes, such as major roads, rail verges and industrial sites;
- Council approved the initial strategy for BC's international work;
- Big Butterfly Count and the Big City Butterflies project are increasing BC's impact and inspiring more people living in urban areas.

The Chair advised that he will be standing down at the close of the AGM after five years as Chair. Karen Goldie-Morrison will succeed as Chair after being unanimously elected to do so by Council.

The Chair proceeded to look back at BC's development over the past five years.

The Chair gave thanks to Andrew Brown who stood down as a Trustee having completed his tenure and for his contributions to governance development.

The Chair reminded members that BC is part of the Rethink Nature partnership with six other species non-governmental organisations (NGOs), with Julie Williams as the joint Chair. Rethink Nature had secured the biggest ever conservation grant awarded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund for the Back from the Brink species recovery project.

BC is doing much more to engage young people and people in urban areas and under-represented ethnic minorities with events like Big Butterfly Count combined with growing social media activity.

The Chair noted that 13-year old Xander Johnston from Aviemore spoke at BC's Scottish members' Day in October about his activities and interest in the Kentish Glory moth and provided helpful tips on how to recruit more young people to the charity.

BC's membership now stands at 40,032, compared to 37,166 this time last year.

The Chair concluded by giving thanks to:

- BC's President, Sir David Attenborough, for his continuous support to BC;
- BC's Trustees, past and present, for all their hard work and to previous Chairs for their inspiration;
- BC's staff across the UK for their dedication and commitment, and to the Chief Executives, David Bridges, Martin Warren and now Julie Williams.
- BC's financial supporters and partners, without whom BC would not be able to thrive;
- Especially to Branches, volunteers and members for their support and continuing commitment to the conservation of butterflies and moths.

5 Treasurer's report to members and adoption of the Annual Report & Consolidated Accounts and Balance Sheet for the year ended 31st March 2019

BC's Hon. Treasurer, Nigel Symington, began by summarising the key economic and political developments over the last year and their implications for conservation funding.

Nigel advised that BC had a very successful year with revenue increased by £230,000 to its highest ever operating income of £4.3million. BC's total expenditure also reached a record high at £4.5million, of which £3.8million was spent on conversation work.

Nigel confirmed that BC's record-keeping and controls are in excellent shape following another clean audit report.

Last year there was a net decrease in funds, as BC spent £157,000 more than it brought in. Trustees are comfortable with this following several years building up BC's financial reserves, and Council have budgeted for a further deficit in 2020.

Nigel gave thanks to BC's members for their generosity, as membership income rose by 5% up to £983,000 and membership numbers have increased by 10% during the year. Donations also increased by 5% to £635,000 and Gifts in Wills amounted to £724,000.

Smaller sources of income have also grown, with Contract and Royalty income increased by over one third to £363,000, and investments and bank interest grew by 9% to £244,000.

Against these buoyant figures, Grant Funding has decreased by £236,000 which is mainly due to the reduction in Landfill Community Funds. This decrease reflects the increasingly demanding environment for raising funds from all external sources. Nigel congratulated Sandra Muldoon and her fundraising team on achieving such good results in increasingly difficult conditions.

Nigel confirmed that without this level of support by BC's members and supporters BC would not be able to grow and achieve all the wonderful work that is being undertaken.

Nigel finally gave thanks to BC's branches and volunteers for their amazing contribution. If BC had to pay for the time given by the 18,000 volunteers it would be valued at an estimated £14million.

The Honorary Treasurer proposed the adoption of the Annual Report and Accounts, which was seconded by Simon Saville. 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 Susan Foden 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 thanking everyone for attending the AGM.

The CEO announced that the first Branch of BC was founded in the West Midlands forty years ago by Terry Green and Mike Williams. The West Midlands Branch is now the largest of all 32 BC Branches, with over 2,567 individual members, and thanked everyone involved in the Branch. Julie advised it was a privilege to celebrate this special anniversary year with the Branch.

Julie continued by looking back over the year and stated that her highlight was the Big Butterfly Count which in 2019 was the most successful in its 10-year history. 113,000 people took part

and spotted 1.6 million butterflies within the UK during the three-week period. Nearly half a million Painted Lady butterflies were seen, with several other common species having a bumper summer.

Despite this success, BC remains concerned over the continued decline of the UK's widespread species. The Small Tortoiseshell has declined by 78% since the 1970s, and other widespread species such as the Large White, Small White, Common Blue, Holly Blue and Green-veined White saw numbers drop compared to last year.

BC's science and research teams are working hard collecting and analysing data to understand the drivers and solutions that are needed to tackle these declines.

Julie thanked BC's dedicated volunteer recorders who helped increase BC's biological data records by over one million per year. This data enabled BC to publish 20 scientific papers in the last year covering a range of topics including the impact of climate change and light pollution.

BC's data was used in the State of Nature 2019 report which revealed that 41% of the UK's species studied has declined, with the number of moths down by 25% and butterflies 17%.

BC will increase its policy work during 2020 to take more action, by:

- finding the right messages to make people care about the UK's wildlife across a wide-range of diverse audiences;
- creating engaging campaigns to show people that they can make a difference;
- understanding better why butterflies and moths matter to people;
- encouraging more people to connect with nature and promote health and wellbeing benefits;
- finding new and innovative ways to engage and encourage young people to care and get involved in nature;
- remaining relevant and being able to adapt and adjust;
- collaborating and working in partnership for the good of all nature.

Julie concluded by thanking Dr Jim Asher who retired as Chair of BC, and his wife Denise, for their dedication and commitment over the years.

Julie thanked BC's wonderful volunteers who work tirelessly throughout the year, and BC's 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 52% of BC's total income. Without their vital support BC's conservation work would not be possible.

8 Council Elections

Andrew Brown, Kathryn Dawson, Karen Goldie-Morrison, Michael Johnston and Jim Asher stood down by rotation. Karen Goldie-Morrison and Michael Johnston were entitled and willing to offer themselves for re-election. Kathryn Dawson had resigned, and Andrew Brown and Jim Asher had stood down at the end of their tenure and were not allowed to seek re-election, which left a total of five vacancies on Council.

One new candidate stood for election, Laurence Harwood, who had submitted an Election Statement (sent to all members). Laurence was nominated, eligible and made a declaration.

There were sufficient vacancies on Council for these appointments to be made without a contest.

The election of Karen Goldie-Morrison was proposed by Roger Dobbs and seconded by Fiona Barclay. The election was approved by a unanimous show of hands.

The election of Laurence Harwood was proposed by Andy Barker and seconded by Chris Winnick. The election was approved by a unanimous show of hands.

The election of Michael Johnston was proposed by Mike Dean and seconded by Ilija Vukomanovic. The election was approved with a show of hands. There was one abstention noted.

Karen Goldie-Morrison, Laurence Harwood and Michael Johnston were declared to have been duly elected as Trustees.

9 Size of Council Board

Karen Goldie-Morrison formally proposed the resolution previously circulated with the AGM papers, to reduce the Board size to 10 elected Trustees, plus two additional places available for co-option by decision of Council, to take effect from the AGM in November 2020. This was seconded by Roger Dobbs.

The reduction of the Council Board was approved by a show of hands, with two votes against and one abstention noted.

10 Q & A

Q: Disappointed with the result of the vote to reduce the size of Council as it reduced opportunities for representation of branch interests.

The Chair explained that the principal purpose in taking the decision to reduce the size of Council was made following a review of the size of Boards in similar organisations, and that BC was out of line with current Charity Commission recommendations. The Charity Commission state that good practice is for Boards to consist of no more than 12 Trustees. The Chair advised that Council believe this still offers plenty of opportunity for members to nominate themselves for election with a Board of 10 Trustees. The Chair also confirmed that there had been an overwhelming 'for' vote by proxy to reduce the Board size.

Q: With regards to inspiring individuals, are there plans to develop a national strategy for working with private landowners?

The Chair answered that BC currently does a lot at a regional level as Branches work with landowners. BC also works with major landowners such as National Trust, but agreed that BC could be doing more nationally.

The CEO replied that conservation delivery is about landscape-scale and it is important to work with landowners. BC is committed to this and part of the Building Sites for Butterflies project is to create more advice for landowners. BC is currently working on different mechanisms for smarter ways of working with landowners.

Date of Next AGM

The date of the next AGM will be Saturday 14th November 2020. The venue is yet to be finalised but it will be held within the Greater London area.

The AGM was then formally closed.

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