



Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at the Cedar Court Hotel, Huddersfield, on Saturday 12th November 2022 at 11.35am.

Present

88 members were recorded as present in person, and 199 members joined online.

Chair's introductory remarks

Karen Goldie-Morrison, Chair of Butterfly Conservation (BC), welcomed everyone to BC's AGM, notice having been properly served, together with the agenda, Council election statements and proxy voting details, all of which were circulated to all members with the 2021/22 Annual Impact Report.

As many questions as possible from those submitted in advance would be answered in the Q&A session. Any that remain unanswered will have answers posted on BC's website.

1 Apologies

Apologies had been received from the following Members: Sarah Eno, Simon Spencer, Anne Spencer, Audrey Burbery, Judy Dunmore, Priscilla Roberts, Peter Roberts, Richard Lewington, Sonia Allen, David Dunbar, Jill Dunbar.

2 Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on Saturday 13th November 2021

The Minutes of the meeting had been published on BC's website and, as they had been made available to those wishing to see a full copy, the Chair took them as having been read.

Proxy votes on the Resolution to approve the minutes were cast in advance of the AGM and we had received 168 votes in favour, 0 votes against and 13 votes abstaining. The minutes were approved.

3 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

4 Annual Report - Chair's Report to Members

The Chair referred to recent global and economic events and then focused on the climate and biodiversity crises. Rising temperatures and drought were challenging our already nature-depleted country, and wildlife populations have plummeted.

Against this backdrop, with its 2026 Strategy, BC has decided to increase its effectiveness as a conservation body. Scaling up from its current size and 40,000 membership requires development of its teams, infrastructure, and ways of working. Julie will expand on the roll out of the 2026 Strategy and current action for nature in her CEO report.

Looking at how butterflies and moths were doing in Britain, the year's butterfly numbers stood 28th out of the 46 years of the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme. Of 56 butterfly species, 36 saw

annual numbers decrease, 19 saw an annual increase and one was unchanged from the previous year. Habitat specialists are doing better than the widespread species.

The Chair moved onto some of BC's projects in 2021/22. The Back from the Brink partners in England have restored 96 threatened species over 4 years. Species on the Edge in Scotland and Natur am Byth! in Wales have similar aims. Brilliant Butterflies and Big City Butterflies focus by contrast on encouraging widespread species by creating new habitats along grass verges and on butterfly banks. Working with partners and landowners on major projects is key, providing advice for the management of species.

Volunteer scientists are at the heart of BC's effort. Butterfly counts in the summer contribute important data to BC's monitoring schemes. Long-term datasets tell us how butterflies and moths and nature are doing and especially the effects of climate change. BC's science and research teams can assess the most effective conservation measures.

Conservation at a local level to restore habitats can make a real difference. Helping Hands for Butterflies in Scotland helps urban meadows thrive through online and in-person events for volunteers. Green Recovery for Morecambe Bay engages local communities on practical habitat management and exploring responses to nature through art.

Finally, BC's voice is louder when we work with others. Grasslands + is a coalition with Plantlife and Bumblebee Conservation Trust. Its focus is the world's Grasslands, which are important for butterflies and moths and hold a third of the world's carbon.

The Chair thanked all the groups of people who make BC's work possible, including the staff led by Julie and the Senior Leadership Team, and the thousands of volunteers both within and beyond the branches. The Chair thanked her fellow trustees and thanked members for their continued support. Final thanks were to Nigel Symington, a very valuable member of BC's Council, stepping down after 10 years as a trustee and BC's Treasurer for the past 5 years.

5 Treasurer's report to members and adoption of the Annual Report & Consolidated Accounts and Balance Sheet for the year ended 31st March 2022

BC's Honorary Treasurer, Nigel Symington, began by saying that despite another challenging year, BC had ended the year in a strong financial position, showing a small surplus. Total income was slightly down on the year before - £4.3m against £4.5m- but expenditure was almost the same as the prior year, at £4.3 million. The final result therefore showed income exceeding expenses by £79,000.

Grant funding for conservation activities faced a challenging year, partly because of the covid pandemic. Legacies and donations also both showed a modest decline, while income from membership subscriptions offset this with a small increase. Tight control was exercised on costs. BC ended the year with free financial reserves of £4.06m. The level of expenditure on charitable activities had been maintained at £3.65m, almost the same as the year before.

Members had all received full details of BC's finances in the audited figures which were included in the impact report. BC had this year, as in all past years, received an unqualified approval of our accounts from the auditors.

BC continued to receive a good performance from its endowment fund. The value of the fund at the year-end was £5.6m, compared with £5.3m at the start of the year. Bearing in mind that BC had also drawn income totalling £225k from the fund over the course of the year, this shows a total return of 9.5%. BC's investment committee believes that the present prudent policy of withdrawals from the fund remains appropriate for the coming year.

BC continued to operate a sustainable investment policy, requiring zero exposure to companies with fossil fuel reserves. BC is also invested to have a lower carbon footprint and a higher social dividend than the relevant MSCI benchmark figures.

Nigel then reflected on the growth that BC has experienced over the last 10 years: since March 2012, expenditure on charitable activities has gone up by over half and membership has more than doubled. Nigel was happy to be stepping down when BC was in a position of significant financial and managerial strength and was handing over the role of Honorary Treasurer to Hugh Ellerton, with whom he had been working closely over the last year.

Nigel ended by thanking Julie and the staff over the years who had given him their expertise and advice, his fellow Council members who had encouraged and supported him in his role, the volunteers with whom he had worked nationally and in Sussex Branch, and most of all BC's members and supporters, whose generosity, loyalty and support have been the solid foundation on which BC's success has been built.

The Honorary Treasurer proposed the adoption of the Annual Report and Consolidated Accounts and Balance Sheet for the year ended 31 March 2022 and handed over to the Chair to give the results of the proxy votes. Proxy votes to adopt the Annual Report and Accounts had been cast in advance of the AGM, and we had received 173 votes in favour, 0 votes against and 8 votes abstaining. The Annual Report and Consolidated Accounts and Balance Sheet for the year ended 31 March 2022 were therefore adopted.

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

The Chair said that BC had been well served by Buzzacott LLP over the last year and remained pleased with their diligence. The Honorary Treasurer has proposed the reappointment of Buzzacott as Auditor, and for Council to be authorised to set their remuneration.

Proxy votes on the Resolution to approve Buzzacott's reappointment and set their remuneration had been cast in advance of the AGM. We had received 171 votes in favour, 2 votes against and 8 votes abstaining. The reappointment of Buzzacott LLP and authorisation for Council to set their remuneration was approved.

7 Chief Executive Officer's (CEO) Report

Julie Williams, CEO, said she was pleased to see so many people face to face again and welcomed those members who were watching from home. Julie added her own personal thanks to Nigel Symington for his work both as a Trustee and as Treasurer.

Work to inspire people to act for butterflies and moths continues at pace as BC works to turn its strategic plan into action. Recent results from this year's Big Butterfly Count show the overall trend for butterflies across the UK remains a declining one, with an average of just under 9 butterflies seen per Count: an all-time low in the thirteen years since the citizen science project began. However, BC's strategy is working. Work is focusing on more butterflies and moths in recovery, more landscapes improving and more people taking action.

Julie then outlined some of the activities associated with each of BC's three ambitious goals.

Goal 1: Halve the number of UK's threatened species of butterflies and moths

BC's research work is helping it to understand more about the ecology of butterflies and moths and the impact of climate change on their habitats. BC is supporting more PhDs thanks to a £1million donation from David Hughes, in memory of his wife: the Heather Corrie Lepidoptera

Research Fund will develop research collaborations to help us understand the key drivers of change like land use, pollution and climate change. This year BC launched the Diarsia Award in memory of Dr Douglas Boyes, a brilliant scientist and conservation advocate. This award will provide grants to young butterfly and moth researchers, allowing them to advance their careers in lepidoptera research.

Survey and monitoring work remains key, and BC now holds over 17 million butterfly records and 38 million moth records gathered by thousands of recorders and BC is grateful for their hard work. Julie made special mention of the county butterfly and moth recorders.

During the next year BC will roll out an expansion of the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme and further develop and promote rare moth monitoring. Understanding more about the location and habitat needs of the 71 species on the threatened list is crucial to plan their long-term recovery. Over the next year BC will also support others to develop monitoring in new areas across the globe and hopes to secure funding to develop a new Global Butterfly Index.

Goal 2: Improve the condition of 100 of the UK's most important landscapes for butterflies and moths

BC has recruited its first ever Landscapes Manager who will be leading the work to develop partnerships with key landowners, businesses and communities who can improve habitats at a large scale. BC is also planning to broaden its reach to include urban landscapes, green infrastructure, and brownfield sites. Priorities are being confirmed for more than 100 landscapes that BC aims to make measurably better for butterflies and moths, and next year targeted projects will be created to attract external funding for key landscapes. Next year will also see the launch of the new Land Use Hub, which will be available online making it easy to share information and collaborate with partners.

Goal 3: Transform 100,000 wild spaces in the UK for people, and for butterflies and moths

BC has set out to create 100,000 wild spaces by the end of 2026. Next year BC will launch a portal to make it easy for people to download resources and become part of a wild space community; launch a campaign in all 4 countries of the UK; and roll out resources to schools through an education portal. In 2023 BC will be building on pilot schemes in southwest England and Morecambe Bay by developing a new project demonstrating the potential health and wellbeing benefits of creating Wild Spaces.

Julie moved on to talk about BC's ambitious work programme for the year ahead, including:

- actively listening to and involving young people in helping deliver BC's strategy, creating opportunities for under 25s including an internship programme and developing new volunteering opportunities.
- running 5 major advocacy campaigns over the next 3 years, starting in 2023. Initial campaigns will focus on light pollution and sustainable trees and woods. BC will also join in partnership with other NGOs in the sector to actively champion for positive change in environmental legislation.
- in the fight against climate change, this year BC have started work to scope out our sustainability plans and we hope to publish our net zero target in 2023/24.

Julie concluded by thanking BC's members, volunteers, Branch committees, Trustees, partners, funders, dedicated staff and every single person that has taken action for butterflies, moths and the natural world.

8 Council Elections

There were three vacancies on Council this year. The Chair said that she, Nigel Symington and Laurence Harwood had stood down by rotation. Nigel was at the end of his extended

tenure, as Honorary Treasurer, and the Chair thanked him for his dedication and commitment. Laurence and Karen are entitled and willing to stand for re-election.

One new candidate submitted a nomination to stand for election: Martin Spray submitted an Election Statement which was distributed with the invitation to this meeting. Martin was nominated, is eligible and has made a declaration.

There were sufficient vacancies for these appointments to take place without a contest. Proxy votes were cast in advance and the results, in alphabetical order by surname, were as follows:
Karen Goldie-Morrison received 150 votes.
Laurence Harwood received 143 votes.
Martin Spray received 150 votes.

Proxy votes on the Resolution to appoint Martin Spray, Laurence Harwood and Karen Goldie-Morrison had been cast in advance. 175 votes were received in favour; 2 votes against; and 4 votes abstaining. The Chair declared that Martin Spray had been appointed as a Trustee and Laurence Harwood and Karen Goldie-Morrison had been re-elected as Trustees.

9 Q & A

The Chair read some previously submitted questions, which were answered by staff.

Q: What difference are we really making on the ground for declining species?

A: That's a big question of course – so much of our work is aimed at making an impact on this, from policy work to our research and our landscape scale projects. But it's a good question to ask. We've seen some great successes this year on many of our threatened species: High Brown Fritillary had a great year on Dartmoor as a result of our work with landowners over the last 15 years; our Chequered Skipper reintroduction in Northamptonshire is going really well with the population holding steady in numbers and seemingly expanding a little in the area it occupies. Our branch-led reintroduction project in the Malverns has released Pearl-bordered Fritillaries back into the landscape. Our Kent's Magnificent Moths Project has seen some great signs this year with expanding populations of Black-veined Moth, Fiery Clearwing and Sussex Emerald. Our focused Threatened Species Programme and Landscapes Programme both aim to increase our capacity to deliver more targeted work like this. It's fair to say that we are still seeing worrying declines in more widespread species for which the solutions are more challenging – important policy actions in England like the new ELM scheme supporting farmers and Local Nature Recovery Strategies have both been delayed by chaos in government. That's why we are doing more through focused campaigns planned for the next year and are an active part of community of NGOs calling for swift government action on the environment.

Q: What progress has been made relative to the Wild Spaces Goal?

A: Wild Spaces has been mostly promoted to our existing membership this year, with participants able to register or pledge a Wild Space on our website. To date we are approximately halfway towards our year one goal of 1,000 Wild Spaces. We have also secured our first Wild Spaces focused project, in Perth and Stirling, funded by the National Heritage Lottery Fund, and appointed the Officer this week. We are planning for a UK wide spring Wild Spaces PR campaign, particularly focusing on urban audiences, and this will be tied in with the launch of a Wild Spaces portal that will allow participants to not only register and pledge a Wild Space but also access a range of resources, upload photos, mark their Wild Space on a map, and be encouraged to report what species of Butterfly and Moth make use of their Space.

Q: How is Butterfly Conservation addressing the challenge of fundraising in a climate where individuals are under pressure to divert money to address 'cost of living' demands?

A: BC's strategic context is of an uncertain economic outlook; we must therefore be realistic about our income growth forecasts and the actual possibility that we might not meet them. However, we can plan for the impact of a recession. We will need to review and monitor this risk throughout the strategy, to stay agile; be ready to amend plans and always focus our investment on those donor segments with greatest propensity to give to BC. We are not planning to increase our membership subscriptions for next year, despite the additional costs BC are incurring (eg increases to postage and paper prices). We are closely monitoring membership renewal figures to check the level of leavers as a result of financial concerns. We are also monitoring donation and legacy income closely and taking further steps to diversify our funding streams to ensure that we retain a sustainable level of income. In addition, BC has recently undertaken an initial review of our strategy on fundraising and has identified that we currently are underperforming in terms of sourcing funding from major donors. Though major donors are unlikely to be impacted as significantly by 'cost of living' demands, they do form part of a demographic of individual giving, so investing in relationship-building has potential to bring in significant income to BC. To this end, we are appointing a Senior Major Donors Officer.

Q: I have heard that we are not renewing the leases on some of our reserves?

A: We have always reviewed the leases of reserves as they come to an end. With the ending of the Basic Payment Scheme in England, we will see a significant reduction in our income (1/3) for work on our reserves. Using our new Nature Reserves strategy, we are looking at those lower performing, leased reserves to look for savings e.g. getting landlords to take responsibility for tree safety or removal of annual rents.

Date of Next AGM

The date of the next AGM will be Saturday 4th November 2023. The venue has not yet been decided, but it will be held in within the southeast of England.

The AGM was then formally closed, at 10.50am.

Signed by the Chair.....

Date.....