



38th Annual General Meeting

Agenda

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on Monday 17th December 2018 in Hall 5, International Convention Centre, 8 Centenary Square, Birmingham, B1 2EA, United Kingdom.

142 members of the British Ecological Society attended the meeting.

1. Minutes of the past AGM

The minutes of the 37th AGM held on Wednesday 13th December 2017 in the Jan Van Eyckzaal Room, International Convention Centre, Van Rysselberghestraat 2, 9000 Gent, Belgium (as published in the *Bulletin* Vol 49:1 pp 24-26) were presented to the meeting.

The motion to approve the minutes was proposed by W. Gosling, seconded by M. Hassell and carried by a majority with no votes against.

2. Accounts

The Accounts for the year ended 31 December 2017 (as published in the *Bulletin* Vol 49:3 pp 67-94) and summarised in the Annual Review were presented to the meeting. These were the first set of accounts audited by the new auditors Haysmacintyre. The auditors gave both internal processes and the finances of the Society a clean bill of health but they did suggest the Society revise its reserves policy which it did by moving from a fixed sum to two years of operating costs.

The motion to approve the minutes was proposed by R. Mitchell, seconded by S. Hartley and carried by a majority with no votes against.

3. Update on the BES headquarters

In July 2018 it was agreed that the partnership between the organisations owning Charles Darwin House be dissolved because of the complexity of the existing arrangements and lack of progress with collaborative projects between the co-owners. Both Charles Darwin House 1 and 2 will be sold and the sale is likely to return a significant profit to the BES. The current timetable means that the BES will be leaving CDH1 in July 2019. The Board

of Trustees have agreed an office accommodation strategy, remaining in central London, and a suitable property has been identified.

Discussion was then opened up to the floor. There was a question on the impact of an uncertain economic climate on the sales. It was noted that economic uncertainty had had a negative impact on the likely sale prices for the two properties but that applied equally to properties the BES was considering buying as well. The Board of Trustees had agreed to mitigate the risk by maintaining the proportion of Society assets held in property rather than significantly increasing or decreasing it. There was also a question on whether the new property would be large enough to continue to hold SIG meetings. It was noted that the office accommodation strategy did include the need for seminar space for up to 50 people so the vast majority of meetings could be accommodated at the new office.

3. The reports of the Treasurer and the Auditors

The Treasurer gave a summary of the financial performance over the last full financial year. In 2017 income was £5.3m, expenditure £4.1m and assets £11.3m. The Board of Trustees had continued to look at ways of diversifying income as a way of mitigating against the risk of a drop in publications income. More funds had been invested in the investment portfolio to generate more income. The Board also continued to consult with professional advisors to ensure that the Society's assets were managed in the most effective ways.

4. The report of the Honorary Secretary

The Honorary Secretary presented some highlights of the previous 12 months.

Publishing

- The BES stable of journals continue to thrive and deliver internationally excellent science to a global audience;
- *People and Nature* has been launched, a new journal aiming to bridge natural and social science disciplines and with an ambition to produce interdisciplinary insights and outcomes has been launched;
- The *Bulletin* rebranded redesigned and launched as *The Niche*;
- Publications Committee and the Board with our partners at Wiley continue to monitor the publishing industry and market with an eye to the future of BES publications and possible innovations and new products.

External Affairs

- The first A level summer school took place, inspiring 30 students from low socio-economic backgrounds with the excitement of field ecology;
- We appointed the first BES Policy Officer based in Scotland to help support our policy work both in Scotland and across the other devolved administrations in the UK;
- The BES continued to make efforts to influence the development of policy including responses to the Environmental Audit Committee's "The changing arctic" inquiry report (referenced 12 times and mentioned in-text 4 times) & the to the Lord's EU

Energy and Environment Sub-Committee 'Brexit: plant and animal biosecurity' inquiry report (referenced 7 times).

Society Programmes covering membership and events

- We currently have 4,374 paying members based in 122 countries, the highest numbers recorded.
- To diversify our income sources we have established an individual giving functionality on the new BES membership portal, which has raised so far £5k for education (Summer School) and £23k for policy. We have also generated new income from advertising revenue, from exhibitors at the AM and from space in The Bulletin/Niche, as well as exploring other opportunities which both meet our strategic goals and generate income;
- The Manchester symposium “Nature Conservation for future generations” with >200 participants from policy, science and practice with the UK conservation agencies in May was a great success and came in under budget

Inclusivity

The BES Equality & Diversity Working Group has continued in its efforts to grow the range of people that the BES serves, something that is an important activity for the Society as it seeks to broaden and deepen the delivery of its strategic aims and represent society more accurately. Some highlights include: 1) Summer School for A level students for black, asian and other minority communities, low income and ‘first in family’ students; 2) peer mentoring scheme for researchers identifying as

- a. Returners to academia
- b. Managing physical and mental health conditions
- c. LGBTQ community

And 3) promoting greater inclusivity at meetings and evaluating grant procedures for sources of bias and developing countermeasures.

The Honorary Secretary thanked the staff, the Board and the Committees for all their time and efforts in producing another fantastic (if challenging) year for the BES. He also extended that thanks to the membership of the BES who provide the science but also the energy at the heart of this Society. He finished with a call to all ecologists to engage with the SIGs, working groups, the committees and ultimately the Board, as the Society always needed enthusiasm and fresh insights. Such engagement was great for people’s career development and more often than not interesting, fun and a great way to meet new people!

5. To elect Members of the Board of Trustees

The new Society Articles adopted at the AGM in December 2017 have allowed for online voting for the first time and enabling all members to have a voice. The BES partnered with the well-established company the Electoral Reform Services Ltd., to run the voting to ensure complete independence. Through the online ballot BES members voted for the roles of President Elect, Vice President, Honorary Secretary and Ordinary Member as existing post holders come to the end of their term of office in December 2018. A total of

922 votes were cast of which 105 were blank and 817 were valid, a huge increase in participation compared to the previous system of voting at the AGM meeting itself. The results of the ballot were as follows:

President Elect: Jane Memmott

Vice President: Mark Emmerson

Honorary Secretary: Adam Vanbergen

Ordinary Member: Stewart Clarke

6. The appointment of the Auditors for 2018 and the Auditor's remuneration

The AGM agreed to delegate authority to the Board of Trustees for the appointment of the auditors and their remuneration. The motion to approve this was proposed by R. Brooker, seconded by W Gosling and carried by a majority with no votes against.

7. Any other business

Professor Richard Bardgett thanked the members of Board of Trustees who were retiring; Professor Hartley, Professor Hails, Professor Davies, Dr Brotherton and Dr Hautekèete.

There was no further business and the meeting was closed.