

## **Minutes of the Online Annual General Meeting held on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> November 2021 at 11.35am.**

### **Present**

381 members were recorded as present.

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

Karen Goldie Morrison, Chair of Butterfly Conservation (BC), welcomed everyone to BC's online AGM and gave thanks to the speakers from the earlier Members' Day event.

One question had been received in advance of the meeting, but further questions were welcomed in the chat function and would be answered live by BC staff where possible; any that remained unanswered would have responses posted on the website.

The Chair then formally opened the AGM, notice having been properly served, together with the agenda, council election addresses and proxy voting details, all of which were circulated to all members with the 2020/21 Annual Report.

### **1 Apologies**

Apologies had been received from the following Members:

Anne Arlidge, Francis Arrowsmith, Paul Butter, Roderick Chapman, Mike Childs, Grayam Cooper, Julie Cozze, Nigel Gosling, Steve Graham, Liz Greig, Brenda and Les Johnson, Amanda Lawrence, Rebecca Money, Sheila and John Morley, Lorraine O'Brien, Christine Preston, Peter Randall, Dee Reeves, Jennifer Warr, Malcolm Watling.

### **2 Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> November 2020**

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 to approve the minutes were cast in advance of the AGM and we had received 162 votes in favour, 1 vote against and 17 votes abstaining.

The minutes were approved.

### **3 Matter Arising**

There were no matters arising.

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

The Chair began by saying that during 2020, BC had to review its whole operation and make some tough decisions as a result of the pandemic. She commended all BC staff led by the CEO Julie Williams and the Senior Leadership Team. The Chair also gave thanks to the Trustees, and especially to the chairs of the sub-committees and to those Trustees who were stepping down this year: Dr Susan Foden and Vice Chair Mike Dean.

The Chair outlined BC's achievements, including:

- Several of our most threatened butterflies and moths were beginning to recover thanks to our landscape-scale projects.
- BC continued to play a leading role in a broad partnership which successfully re-introduced the Large Blue to the UK after it became extinct.
- Over 15,000 active volunteers contributed work worth £18 million per year; our 30 nature reserves covered over 790 hectares of land; and membership was over 39,000.
- In 2020, the Big Butterfly Count attracted 112,000 citizen scientists who submitted a record-breaking 150,000+ counts.
- BC secured special Covid grants, including the Green Recovery fund which has allowed important landscape conservation to continue in the Morecombe Bay Limestones, helping more people to connect to nature.
- BC's new urban project Big City Butterflies was focussing on people engagement in the heart of London.
- BC persuaded Highways England to use low-nutrient soils on all major road projects, encouraging wildflowers and butterflies and moths and reducing local council costs.

The Chair outlined BC's challenges including biodiversity collapse, with insect populations in decline. Whilst the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme officially recorded 2020 a good year for butterflies and moths, 27 of the 58 UK species of butterflies were still recorded in below average numbers and populations were still down on those of 40 years ago with a third of butterflies in long-term decline.

The other major challenge was climate change. The UK was wetter and warmer than 30 years ago and we were already recording changes in distribution of butterflies and moths with several species moving north.

In the lead up to the UN Climate Summit in Glasgow, Butterfly Conservation set up the campaigning coalition Grasslands+ with Plantlife and Bumblebee Conservation. Grasslands were important carbon sinks and worldwide grasslands were under serious threat.

In the face of these crises, the Chair said that strengthening collaborations within the conservation sector continued to be a priority for BC. Together, our monitoring and recording data told the truth about nature in the UK and we were better placed to influence policy decisions. The UK Government already accepted butterflies and moths as official biodiversity indicators, and general indicators of the environment and climate change. UK politicians must be persuaded to explore every avenue to help halt the environment crises through the new Environment and Agriculture bills.

The 2026 Strategy which we launched in October was BC's ambitious response to these challenges. The CEO would expand on the 2026 Strategy in her talk.

The Chair thanked members for their support of BC and for their engagement with butterflies, moths and the natural world, and for joining BC today.

## **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 2021**

BC's Honorary Treasurer, Nigel Symington, began by saying that despite the impact of the pandemic, BC had ended the year in a much better position than we had hoped at the beginning. Our total income was only slightly down on the year before - £4.48 million against 4.50. Our expenditure was significantly down, by £600,000, at £4.3 million against £4.9. Our final result therefore showed annual income exceeding our expenditure by around £200,000.

BC had received a high level of gifts in Wills, over £600,000 above budget, and BC was grateful to all those who were so generous in remembering us in this way. We received emergency funding from sources such as the Green Recovery Fund. One of our most

important income streams was hit by the fact that many grant funders temporarily stopped considering applications as a result of the pandemic, and our grant income ended 11% down on the prior year, £140,000 lower. Our membership declined by 2% during the year. Largely due to the postponement of some conservation projects, our total expenditure was £600,000 lower.

The value of our endowment fund increased by some £650,000, after a decrease of over £800,000 the year before.

Nigel outlined two significant changes to BC's investment policy during the year. Following professional advice, Council had adopted a policy of Total Return in the management of its fund, as permitted by law and a special Charity Commission scheme. This policy gave BC the flexibility to achieve maximum returns on investments, whether this was through generating interest and dividends or through capital growth. As a result, we were now able to apply some of the capital growth on investments to our charitable purposes, allowing us to realise greater total returns from our endowment.

The second change was that Council had adopted a 'Responsible Investment' policy. The Policy focused on investment in companies which shared BC's aims and values. We aim to invest in sustainable assets and avoid investment in assets whose work acts against our aims. In particular, BC had decided to have no exposure to companies with fossil fuel reserves. Our actual figure at 31 March 2021, the financial year end, was zero percent.

Nigel explained that the financial consequences of divestment were likely to be minimal or even positive: there were several fossil-fuel-free funds in which BC could invest, and this number was expected to grow in coming years as more charities adopted such policies. Indeed, our portfolio had shown an unrealised gain of almost £700,000 in this financial year so far, so the value of the portfolio was back up to its pre-pandemic level and now stood at £5.9 million. The total return achieved over the last 12 months amounted to no less than 16%.

Nigel concluded by saying that as a result of these changes, and of decisive and effective action by management and Council throughout the year, BC had ended in a strong financial position which gave a firm foundation on which to build the ambitious plans that the CEO would outline. BC was most grateful to all members, and to supporters and staff, for the loyalty and flexibility that they had shown, and BC looked forward to increasing both the impact and scope of its work and its influence in the wider environmental debate.

The Honorary Treasurer proposed the adoption of the Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2021 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 171 votes in favour, 1 vote against and 8 votes abstaining. The Annual Report and Consolidated Accounts and Balance Sheet for the year ended 31 March 2021 were therefore adopted.

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

The Chair said that BC had been particularly well served by the auditors, Buzzacott, over the last year. Nigel Symington had proposed the reappointment of Buzzacott LLP and for Council to be authorised to set their remuneration.

Proxy votes to approve Buzzacott's reappointment and set their remuneration had been cast in advance of the AGM. We had received 170 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, the CEO, referred members to BC's new strategy, set out in the recent edition of Butterfly. By working together, BC would be able to make a critical difference to the natural world and the twin challenges of climate emergency and biodiversity loss. The new strategy was designed to deliver a step change in butterfly and moth conservation, driving BC's work and activities for the next five years. It would ensure that we delivered the biggest possible impact for nature and ensure BC continued to play a leading role in the conservation sector.

The overall abundance of butterflies and moths had declined but the next five years was BC's chance to turn crisis into opportunity. By being bold and taking imaginative steps to conserve butterflies and moths, we can also help to restore biodiversity, mitigate the climate crisis and start to rebuild the vital kinship between people and the natural world.

BC's evidence-based work, and its dedicated recorders, volunteers, Branches and long-standing loyal membership who are passionate about butterflies and moths made BC stand out in the crowd. Julie thanked everyone for their continued and valuable support, and also thanked her Senior Leadership Colleagues and all BC staff for their hard work and passion.

Julie shared BC's three new strategic goals, which were summarised in an animation. The ambitious five-year goals spelt out the direction of travel. We will:

- 1. Halve the number of UK's threatened species of butterflies and moths
- 2. Improve the condition of 100 of the UK's most important landscapes for butterflies and moths
- 3. Transform 100,000 wild spaces in the UK for people, and for butterflies and moths

Julie continued by outlining the programme of Initiatives which would deliver these three goals, bringing focus and co-ordination to BC's conservation efforts, and inspiring many more people to get involved:

- Initiative 1. Recover butterflies and moths. Over the next five years BC will refocus our science programme to increase understanding of why species are declining and how to recover populations; focus our conservation action on 65 key species in a new threatened species programme; and develop effective species monitoring to demonstrate recovery.
- Initiative 2. Connect people to nature. Over the next five years we will inspire and enable more people, from more varied backgrounds, to enjoy the natural world and to take action for butterflies and moths; broaden participation in our citizen science programmes; improve access to learning and training programmes to increase the number of skilled volunteers; build on our existing wellbeing work, collaborating with health partners to improve mental health by engaging people in creating Wild Spaces; and create learning opportunities for younger audiences from children to young adults.
- Initiative 3. Unite for wildlife. Over the next five years BC will create a new landscape programme to bring the UK's most important landscapes into measurably better condition for butterflies and moths, establish new corporate partners who are committed to managing their land better, develop partnerships with local authorities, charities, corporate partners and communities across the UK to deliver Wild Spaces, collaborate with others to engage communities in taking positive action for nature, and collaborate with partners to create a Global Butterfly Index to drive action and advocacy in meeting the biodiversity crisis at global scale.
- Initiative 4. Tackle threats to nature. Over the next five years BC will produce a suite of habitat-quality indicators to better understand the impact of different drivers, our conservation action on the ground and any policy changes, seek out and encourage

more research collaborations across the sector, and use our data and research to advocate for change in key policy areas affecting butterflies and moths across the UK.

- Initiative 5. Manage land sustainably. Over the next five years BC will create a new land management advisory hub, develop adaptation and mitigation techniques to recover butterflies and moths in a changing climate, and deliver and demonstrate best practice land management for butterflies and moths across landscapes, Wild Spaces and beyond.

Members were directed to our new strategy document on the BC website for more details.

Julie said that the climate and biodiversity emergency meant that the way we worked across all areas of BC must adapt and change. We needed to plan ahead, be more agile, more business orientated, adopt new technologies, and do more research. We needed even more collaboration and partnership, strong environmental laws and governments who were committed to solving the climate and biodiversity crisis, and we needed more innovative, sustainable and green funding.

BC's new strategy provided the roadmap to achieving a world rich in nature and more people having access to the natural world. BC needed its volunteers, Branches, members, supporters, funders, existing partners, new partners and communities from all walks of life to work with staff to achieve this.

Julie finished with a short video from BC's Vice President, Chris Packham, and gave thanks to Chris, saying BC was fortunate to have such a passionate and dedicated Vice President who actively supports our vital work. The CEO thanked everyone for listening and handed back to the Chair.

## **8 Council Elections**

There were seven vacancies on Council this year.

Apithanny Bourne, Mike Dean, Susan Foden, Simon Saville, Nigel Symington, Ilija Vukomanovic, and Chris Winnick have stood down by rotation.

Mike Dean and Susan Foden had come to the end of their nine years' tenure and the Chair thanked them for their dedication and commitment to Council and BC over the years.

Apithanny Bourne, Simon Saville, Nigel Symington, Ilija Vukomanovic, and Chris Winnick are entitled and willing to stand for re-election.

Two new candidates had submitted a nomination to stand for election: Glenn Allison and Elaine King. Both candidates submitted an Election Address which was distributed with the invitation to this meeting. Glenn and Elaine were nominated, were eligible and had 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 were as follows:

- Glenn Allison received 146 votes.
- Apithanny Bourne received 155 votes.
- Dr Elaine King received 156 votes.
- Simon Saville received 149 votes.
- Nigel Symington received 152 votes.
- Ilija Vukomanovic received 155 votes.
- Chris Winnick received 154 votes.

Proxy votes on the Resolution to appoint Glenn Allison, Apithanny Bourne, Elaine King, Simon Saville, Nigel Symington, Ilija Vukomanovic and Chris Winnick as Trustees have been cast in advance. We received 176 votes in favour; 1 vote against; and 3 votes abstaining.

The Chair formally declared that Glenn Allison and Elaine King had been appointed as a Trustee and Apithanny Bourne, Simon Saville, Nigel Symington, Ilija Vukomanovic and Chris Winnick had been re-elected as Trustees.

## **9 Q & A**

The Chair read the following question received from a member:

**Q:** In these days of environmental awareness re single use plastics in particular, is there not a better way of creating cards for membership? Perhaps a paper/card version similar to a business card of old or even just a cut-out from the paper membership renewal reminder? Hope the suggestion is helpful for future years.

The CEO gave the following response:

**A:** We are doing just that: a new non-coated card will be ready by April 2022. In addition, BC was looking to the future, planning to become net zero and more sustainable. Online membership would be available from 2022.

### **Date of Next AGM**

The date of the next AGM will be Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> November 2022. The venue is yet to be finalised.

The AGM was then formally closed, at 12.20pm.

Signed by the Chair.....

Date.....