

## **Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at Stoneleigh Park, Warwick on Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> November 2014**

*Please note that these Minutes are yet to be formally approved*

### **Present**

There were approximately 269 members present

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

David Dennis, outgoing Chair of Butterfly Conservation, welcomed everyone to the AGM. He thanked Mike Slater, the Branch Chair, the Warwickshire Branch Committee and the staff from Head Office for organising the event.

The Chair explained that before lunch awards would be presented to this year's Outstanding Volunteers and members would be able to enjoy talks on conservation topics. The first talk would be by Sharon Hearle, BC's Senior Regional Officer for the East of England, on 'Conserving the Wood White in Northamptonshire' and the second by Dr Dan Hoare, BC's Senior Regional Officer for South East England, on 'Dukes on the Edge: the successful conservation of the Duke of Burgundy in South East England'. Mike Slater, Chair of Warwickshire Branch, would begin after lunch with a talk on 'The restoration and creation of habitats to help Warwickshire's rare butterflies', followed by John Davis, BC's Head of Reserves on 'Successes for butterflies and moths on Butterfly Conservation's nature reserves'. The drawing of the Branch raffle prizes, and the prize M&S vouchers, courtesy of NFU Mutual, would precede the presentation of the Marsh Christian Awards. Finally, Bob Pryce, would conclude the afternoon's talks with a 3D film presentation on 'Butterflies and Moths: the Third Dimension'.

The outgoing Chair handed over to his successor, Dr Jim Asher. Jim has had a wide variety of key roles within BC – as Chair of Upper Thames Branch, Chair of BC's Conservation Committee and, for the last three years, Vice-Chair of Council.

The new Chair then opened the formal AGM.

### **1 Apologies**

Apologies had been received from Trustees Michael Johnston and Mark Young, also from John Duckworth, Peter Hardy (Outstanding Volunteer Award winner), Neil Hulme, Amanda Hunter (Outstanding Volunteer Award winner), Tony and Gay Hoare, Louise Kenyon, Sir Christopher Lever, Stephen Lewis, Lucy Lewis, George Martin, David Redhead, Dr Chris van Swaay (Marsh Christian Trust European Award winner), Roger Smith, Elizabeth A Taylor and Mike Wall.

### **2 Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at Swindon Marriott Hotel, Swindon on Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> November 2013**

The Minutes of the meeting had been published on the website and made available on request. They were proposed by Roger Dobbs and seconded by Andrew Brown, and approved.

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

The Chair opened his speech by advising that the meeting would be hearing both from David Hanson, Honorary Treasurer, and Dr Martin Warren, Chief Executive. The Chair then invited the previous Chairman, David Dennis, to give a brief report on the activities of BC during his chairmanship over the last year.

David reported that this was his last report, after three years as Chair, and it marks a turning point for BC in several ways. Firstly, BC has a Chair, Dr Jim Asher, and a Vice-Chair, Mike Dean, who have a great track record in practical conservation and in running BC Branches. David thanked them both for their many and varied contributions over the last three years.

Secondly, David stated that BC is at the end of Phase 1 of its 2020 Vision work. In 2009, a new path was set calling for substantial growth, in order to really tackle the decline in butterflies and moths. David was able to announce that there have been two recent major achievements; firstly, last year was the highest ever income at £3.5m, and secondly, membership is at its highest ever, now at well over 25,000. Sadly, project funding has become more and more difficult but the Treasurer would discuss this later.

David advised that financial success is now making a difference on the ground. BC Senior Regional Officers are now able to free some time to allow them to develop more projects at local level, and plans are in place to expand BC's network of Regional Officers in the future.

At this point, David paid tribute to BC's senior staff team; they are tackling the big issues with huge energy and skill. Martin Warren and Nigel Bourn have a great reputation both within and outside BC. David also announced that Sam Ellis has now joined this senior team as Director of Conservation and Regions. David also thanked Julie Williams, Deputy Chief Executive, for all her hard work. Julie is developing a great team and they are responding in a highly dynamic way, delivering huge progress for BC. There was a round of applause for the senior management team and all BC staff.

The Annual Review for 2013/14 was sent with the papers prior to the AGM. BC's work for threatened species has had successes in Scotland, Yorkshire, Morecambe Bay, S. Wales, Wiltshire, Northern Ireland and the South Downs. BC's evidence base now contains over 24 million butterfly and moth records, and, last year staff produced over 20 scientific papers, published in leading scientific journals. Over 1000 sites were monitored by over 1500 dedicated volunteers, increasingly aided by new technology. This is in addition to BC's work on its 35 reserves throughout the UK, and the huge engagement of new members and supporters.

Finally, David thanked the audience for everything that they do for BC, as members and volunteers and handed back to the Chair.

The Chair thanked David for the huge amount of work that he has done over the past three years. Although much of it has been behind the scenes, David's work has been immensely useful in solving problems and keeping BC on the right track.

The Chair advised that he is very keen to continue the good work that David has done, but perhaps bringing a slightly different range of interests and experiences to bear. Since the

Chair joined BC in 1981, he has had many great opportunities to see amazing butterflies and moths, and has become involved in many exciting projects and to assist in steering BC on its present path.

Like so many others, the Chair has a life-long passion for butterflies and moths, the landscapes they inhabit, and the need to give our grandchildren a heritage that they can enjoy. He is keen to ensure that BC keeps its conservation objectives at the top of the agenda, and grow the means to deliver these objectives and this is why he sees the 2020 Vision as so important - to ensure that the challenges to butterflies and moths posed by the current environmental and lifestyle pressures and economic barriers are met. BC are already working to develop a rolling 10-year strategy, and looking towards 2025.

The Chair said that growth is not just about numbers and money, it is much more about people and raising their interest, their participation and their involvement in BC's core mission. There is a need to work ever harder to get the message out to the public, to local, national, and international governments. Growth in membership is such an important part of what is being achieved, because it gives not only income and commitment, it also gives more political leverage.

The Chair stated that Branches are a hugely important local presence for members. The more that can be done to welcome new members, the more likely they will be retained and turned into active volunteers. The Chair has attended four Branch AGMs and has seen many different Branches in action in various ways. It is clear that each Branch is different from others – each has its own strengths and its own challenges to deal with. However, one thing is also clear – that all Branches are united by a passion for butterflies and moths and have an enthusiasm to be pro-active in working to conserve them.

It was noted that BC can be immensely proud of its volunteers and the massive input that is made to these common objectives. It sets BC in a high position amongst the other organisations that are considered as peers, such as RSPB, Plantlife and Buglife and through the State of Nature partnership. The Chair also thanked BC's president, Sir David Attenborough, who gives BC such great publicity opportunities.

The Chair continued that BC must continue to recognise the crucial role played by volunteers, and to maintain and grow their interest, commitment and motivation. There is a need to do more to assist with training, making links with landowners and providing the tools needed to do the job. More is already being done to support Branches to develop capacity to be able to welcome, nurture and retain the growing membership. A stronger Regional Officer structure is being put in place to gear up conservation work and to make local impact ever more effective.

It was noted that BC has built a formidable recording and monitoring base and massively useful data on species presence and abundance. A start has already been made to link together knowledge of species and their conservation held by individuals with that of BC's professional staff through initiatives such as SpeciesNet. There is still much work to be done but in summary, there is a need to capitalise the impact made by BC's science and its membership on achieving its objectives.

Finally the Chair stated that he is looking forward to the next three years and is committed to continuing the good work already done to develop BC and to steer it in the right direction.

#### **4 Council Elections**

Roger Dobbs, Susan Foden and Sue Smith stood down by rotation, but all were entitled and willing to offer themselves for re-election. In addition, David Dennis and Simon Spencer have stood down and are not entitled to re-election, leaving two vacancies on Council. Two new candidates stood for election: Andy Barker and Alan Martin who have both submitted Election Addresses (sent to all members). They were nominated, eligible and had made declarations. As there were sufficient vacancies, the election of all five candidates was proposed by Jim Asher and seconded by Nigel Symington. They were approved by a unanimous show of hands.

The Chair expressed his thanks on behalf of BC to both David Dennis and Simon Spencer, who have made first class contributions to Council.

#### **5 To update Butterfly Conservation's memorandum and articles of association by special resolution as follows: to resolve that the articles of association produced to the meeting, circulated with the notice of the meeting and, for the purposes of identification, initialled by the Chair be adopted as the articles of association of Butterfly Conservation in substitution for, and to the exclusion of, the existing memorandum and articles of association.**

The Chairman announced a special resolution to revise the Memorandum & Articles of Association.

The existing governing documents (known as the 'Memorandum and Articles of Association') had not had a major revision since 2003 and have become out-dated. It was proposed that a new, unified governing document (the Articles of Association) be approved and that they:

- Comply with current company and charity law;
- Meet the latest Charity Commission requirements and best practice guidelines; and
- Allows greater use of modern communications for elections and other purposes.

The revisions also tried to ensure that the proposed Articles of Association are clear, straightforward and user-friendly by re-structuring much of the existing content and using plain English.

The revisions had been circulated to the entire membership. The resolution was proposed by Dudley Cheesman and seconded by Kathryn Dawson. The special resolution was approved with no votes against and one abstention at the meeting.

#### **6 Treasurer's report to members and adoption of the Annual Report & Consolidated Accounts and Balance Sheet for the year ended 31 March 2014**

The Treasurer opened his speech with 'money is a means to an end'. Charity money is for spending to achieve a stated, charitable, purpose – BC's purpose is, "Saving butterflies, moths and our environment". The Treasurer then continued to report on how BC is getting on with raising the money needed and how efficient BC is in spending it.

The Treasurer used the analogy, 'football is said to be a game of two halves' and he intended to review the year to March 2014 in two halves, 'before looking at the final score'. His two halves were labelled 'External' and 'Internal'.

It was noted that the external world remains tough and Government continues to make Health, Education, Overseas Aid and Pensioners its priorities and struggles to make the necessary savings in other departments. The result for budgets in Departments such as DEFRA to which BC looks for grants is negative. In the future BC grants from the public sector will continue to remain hard to secure.

The Treasurer continued that the effect on other fundraising areas from this reduction in public sector support is severe. Charities, previously supported by government grants, are being forced to look elsewhere and the result is sharply increased competition for grants from the lottery, from landfill operators and from charitable trusts. BC needs to get inside their thinking, for BC, more research, and closer contact, more planning will be needed. The Treasurer noted that with the above difficulties, it is not an easy fundraising ask but corporates and wealthy individuals may now be the places to look. The Treasurer mentioned the four cornerstones;

- Members & Supporters
- Fundraising
- Conservation
- Financial Management

The Treasurer made further comments about fundraising as BC's successful fundraiser, David Bridges, who has recently retired was present at the AGM. The Treasurer thanked David for all he has achieved for BC.

The Treasurer continued with the 'internal' half of the story. This year's successes are over 25,000 members, 45,000 participants in Big Butterfly Count, a total volunteer effort in the year conservatively valued at £10 million. The Treasurer thanked all members and supporters of BC as they deserve great plaudits for the work they do and in the context of the Society's financial health, for all the support given through subscriptions, donations, appeals, raffle tickets etc. and from our predecessors through legacies.

The Treasurer reported that the Report and Accounts document, and all the financial processes that lie behind it, received a clear audit report, which is an enormous credit to Julie Williams and her team. The Treasurer thanked Julie and her team.

In summary, the Treasurer highlighted that spending on Conservation was just under £2.5 million, an increase of 7% over the previous year and that £10 million of volunteer effort has been achieved.

The Treasurer proposed the adoption of the Report & Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2014, a very respectable year, which was seconded by Mike Dean and approved unanimously at the meeting.

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

David Hanson proposed the reappointment of Buzzacott with Andy Barker seconding this. The appointment was approved and Council was authorised to fix their remuneration.

## **8 Chief Executive Officer's Report**

The Chief Executive, Dr Martin Warren, reported other important achievements of recent years.

The Chief Executive explained that it is 10 years since Butterfly Conservation Europe was formed. It was established in 2004 as an umbrella organisation bringing together existing organisations and experts in countries across Europe. It is run by a small Board with representatives from 7 countries. Butterfly Conservation Europe has developed a network of 45 partners in 36 countries, representing a huge amount of expertise on Lepidoptera.

Important documents explaining the problems facing butterflies across Europe and some guidelines on how threatened species can be conserved have been produced, including the European Red List of Butterflies, the Climatic Risk Atlas of European butterflies, and a manual on the Do's and Don'ts for Butterflies of the EU Habitats Directive.

A major priority of BC Europe has been to co-ordinate and develop a butterfly monitoring network across the continent and monitoring schemes have been established in 19 countries. These collate data from an astonishing 3,500 butterfly transects, all using the same methodology as the one pioneered in the UK.

This data has helped to produce two important indicators: a grassland indicator that shows that 17 widespread grassland species have declined by over 50% in the last 22 years; and a Climatic Change Indicator that shows that butterfly communities are changing and becoming more dominated by warmth loving species.

Action has also been undertaken for threatened species, like the Macedonian Grayling which is reduced to a single site that is threatened by quarrying for marble. Books have also been produced on the following; the Prime Butterfly Areas of Bulgaria and Serbia, as well as a Red List and Action Plan for the Butterflies of Turkey. In summary, BC Europe has made excellent progress in 10 years and was well placed to make a significant contribution to the conservation of European Lepidoptera in coming years.

The Chief Executive has visited a number of Branches during the year and has been hugely impressed by the strength and depth of their work. The Chief Executive noted that the 31 Branches around the UK really are the bedrock of BC's work and they cannot be praised enough for the huge effort and expertise they bring.

The Chief Executive advised the meeting that BC has also reached two important recording milestones this summer; the Butterflies for the New Millennium has now collated over 10 million butterfly records, while the National Moth recording scheme now has amassed over 18 million records.

The Chief Executive added his thanks to all BC Branches and volunteers who contribute to this impressive work, and who organise 2,200 events every year. Together with the huge expertise of BC staff, this is what makes Butterfly Conservation the special organisation it is.

***Q: What collaboration with other NGO's is being undertaken or planned?***

***Dudley Cheesman***

Martin Warren advised that a lot of collaborative work with other species NGO's such as Plantlife, Buglife, RSPB etc. is already being undertaken. BC has its own niche but is also involved in developing wider conservation initiatives. Martin explained that the State of Nature Partnership has worked together to raise the profile of nature but with one voice, which the Government prefer. There was a recent Conference for Nature, which was headed up by Sir David Attenborough, which attracted some politicians and a lot of businesses. It has made the corporate sector aware that nature conservation needs to be an intrinsic part of their businesses.

***Q: What is BC's approach regarding lobbying? For example, aerial spraying, will BC take a more muscular lobbying approach?***

***Tony Gillie, Upper Thames Branch***

Martin explained that as above, collaboration gives us a stronger voice. BC also want to be able to back up our voice with sound science. BC lends support to relevant campaigns whenever we can, but we focus our effort on campaigns when our role can be influential. Lobbying is very time consuming and it is often hard to influence events, so the effort has to be judged to be worthwhile. Martin said that BC will do what it can but it was important to assess lobbying effort against BC's practical work, which is achieving so much on the ground. It was also noted that social media is a good tool for lobbying.

***Q: How many employees does BC currently have?***

72

***Q: Scotland has been running a programme of MSP's becoming Species Champions, what about England?***

***Mike Slater, Warwickshire Branch***

Martin Warren agreed that this had been a great initiative, run with colleagues in Scottish Link. It was a very useful way of raising the profile of species conservation. A pilot has been run in South West England but it had been decided to wait until after the next election when there would be a new crop of MPs to influence.

***Q: There have been many years of the Garden Butterfly Survey. With Dr Margaret Vickery, retiring; will the survey continue?***

Martin explained that BC has other ways to record garden species, for example Big Butterfly Count, but would also like to see the survey continue as it was popular and yielded valuable data. Jim Asher advised that there is a meeting with the recording team soon when its future would be decided. However if anyone would like to volunteer to help run the Garden Butterfly Survey, could they please contact Jim or Martin.

**Q: With membership increasing, how do Branches manage free memberships and increase retention?**

**Judy Dunmore, Norfolk Branch**

Julie Williams advised that two thirds of members joining on free membership offers are being retained and they make a significant profit in year two. The secret weapon is the Big Butterfly Count, from which BC has now gathered 70k email addresses who are the main source of new members. Julie advised that Head Office can offer support to Branches to help with servicing of new members such as New Members' Days, newsletters, templates etc. New members coming in via this route are an important potential source of active Branch members and even Committee members of the future. Jim Asher reiterated how important New Members' Days are, they engage people.

**Date of Next AGM**

The date of the next AGM will be Saturday 14 November 2015. The location will be confirmed at a later date.

The AGM was then formally closed.

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