



BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2008

Minutes of the meeting held at York St. John University, Lord Mayors Walk, York on Saturday 22 November 2008

Present

There were c 163 members present.

Chairman's Introductory Remarks:

Maurice Avent, the Society's Chairman, welcomed members to the Society's 40th Anniversary AGM and Members' Day, hosted by Yorkshire Branch of Butterfly Conservation. He thanked the Branch Chair, David Baker, and the Branch Committee. He also gave special thanks to Julie Williams, Sandra Muldoon and the many other members of staff from BC's Head Office in East Lulworth whose fantastic team effort had made this special weekend possible.

He gave an introduction to the Member's Day programme beginning with a talk by the Chief Executive, Dr Martin Warren, to mark 40 years of growth and success, followed by a range of presentations covering both local and national topics by expert speakers with exceptional subject knowledge. Dr Tom Brereton would speak on 'Butterfly Trends and Indicators', followed by two talks with local relevance; Dr Terry Whitaker and Sean Clough of the Yorkshire Branch would speak on 'The Status of the Small Pearl-Bordered Fritillary in Yorkshire' and Dave Wainwright would speak on 'Conserving Threatened Species in the North York Moors'. This would be followed by talks from John Davis, BC's Head of Reserves, and Dr Caroline Bulman, BC's Senior Species Ecologist. Afternoon tea and the drawing of the Branch raffle prizes and prize hamper, courtesy of NFU Mutual, would precede the 40th Anniversary Marsh Christian Awards. The afternoon would culminate with a keynote speech on 'Lessons from 40 years of Conservation Research' by Professor Jeremy Thomas. The evening's events would begin with a wine reception followed by a 40th Anniversary Gala dinner to celebrate four decades of growth and progress.

Sunday's events would begin with Richard Fox discussing Recording Schemes and Mark Parsons talking about moths. This would be followed by Jenny Joy and Mike Williams' presentation on Landscape Partnerships leading onto Richard Smith discussing Threatened Species in South Wales. Dr Andy Barker and Paul Kirkland would then speak about the achievements within their own areas before the final presentation of the weekend, Dr Chris Thomas' keynote speech on 'Butterflies and Climate Change'.

The Chairman then opened the formal AGM, notice for which had been served together with the agenda, details of the special resolution, Council election addresses and proxy forms; all of which were circulated in Butterfly Magazine, Autumn 2008 edition, Issue 99 together with the booking form for the meeting.

1. Apologies

These were received from trustees Hugo Brooke, David Dunbar, Mandy Gluth, Neil Jones and Mark Young. Apologies were also received from Bill Bacon, Michael Clipper-Snelling, Elizabeth Goodyear, Jan Miller, Mr R A Softly, Irene Wade and Lee and Jax Westmoreland.

2. Minutes of the last AGM held on 17 November 2007

The minutes of the meeting had been published on the website and made available on request. The minutes were approved unanimously (proposed by Jim Asher and seconded by Simon Spencer).

3. Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

4. Special Resolution to amend the Memorandum and Articles of Association

The Chairman announced a special resolution to amend the Memorandum & Articles of Association by inserting a series of minor amendments.

These detailed amendments are required by the replacement of the Companies Act 1985 by the combined Companies Acts 1985-2006; the major amendments cover the duties of a Trustee or Trustees if a conflict of interests arises because of a duty of loyalty owed to another, also the rights of members to appoint a proxy. These amendments have been circulated to the entire membership and are necessary to meet the requirements of the Revised Companies Act 2006. Maurice Avent Proposed the adoption of the amendments and this was seconded by Ian Small and approved unanimously.

5. Chairman's Report to Members:

Maurice Avent spoke of the great honour of standing before members as Chairman of an organisation for which he held a longstanding admiration and expressed his thanks for receiving such a responsibility.

The opportunity was taken to highlight the contribution of Maurice Avent's predecessor, Dudley Cheesman. Dudley had presided over a golden era within the Society. His steady influence, enormous commitment and hard work had helped the Society grow substantially both in terms of membership numbers and turnover while at government level the Society's huge contribution to conservation had been recognised and acknowledged.

Acknowledgement was also given to Trustees and particular thanks given to David Dennis for his support in accepting the role of Vice Chairman. He, Ian Small, Hugo Brooke and Maurice Avent, with the Executive, will be responsible for upholding Governance by reviewing the recommendations of the Charity Act 2006.

A summary was made of some of the salient features during Dudley's last year of office, which marked the start of Butterfly Conservation's 40th Anniversary year and provided the chance to take stock of the enormous progress made since a group of volunteers got together in 1968. For several years the organisation was dependent upon volunteer efforts only but now there are no fewer than 57 members of staff, many of whom operate from the Society's headquarters in Lulworth. The spirit and enthusiasm of the team was summarised by the Open Day held on 6 September 2008 when the entire office was thrown open to supporters and dignitaries; to contain costs the staff rallied around and turned their hands to everything from coat handling to coffee pouring.

At that event the Minister for Schools, Jim Knight, launched a new children's website to mark the Society's 40th Anniversary and each division of the Society set up an exhibition highlighting their current operations and achievements. Sir Martin Doughty, the Chairman of Natural England praised Butterfly Conservation's voluntary efforts. Branches too participated in this celebratory year and the many and varied events highlighted the dynamism of the Society.

The Society's founders would undoubtedly be astonished to hear of the current membership and that the Society now manages a total of 33 nature reserves, run by members of no less than 31 volunteer branches. Many of the Society's achievements would be covered by speakers over the course of the AGM.

One of the Society's most significant achievements during the last year was the adoption of butterflies as government indicators of biodiversity both at UK level and in Scotland. Butterfly Conservation owes deep thanks to Dr Tom Brereton and his colleagues and the thousands of transect walkers who count butterflies from April to September. The summer of 2008 will not be remembered as a vintage butterfly year yet the persistence of volunteers despite the overcast windy and wet conditions continued to produce detailed and robust figures that have raised butterflies high up the agenda of policy makers and politicians, thus giving the Society a far greater chance of attracting the necessary resources for their conservation in coming years.

Sir David Attenborough, President of Butterfly Conservation, launched the Moths Count campaign in May 2007. Richard Fox and his team including Zoe Randle & Les Hill were now well underway in gathering millions of records from the County Moth Recorders thus charting the current distribution of these beautiful creatures. Such work is raising the profile of moths and highlighting their beauty while indicating their crucial role as indicators of the health of the food chain, fewer moths would result in fewer bats and birds, their conservation is therefore vital in ensuring a healthy environment for all to enjoy.

The Society continued its involvement in landscape scale projects aimed at ensuring the long term survival of threatened butterflies and moths, the conservation team have updated the Society's list of these projects. Butterfly Conservation is now involved with 76 schemes scattered across the UK. Meanwhile Butterfly Conservation's nature reserves continue as flagships of the Society's work and two new reserves were opened during the year at Mabie Forest in Scotland and Ryton Wood Meadows in Warwickshire; the Society also acquired a new reserve Caederi or Oak Meadow in Herefordshire. The Society's acquisition of a large part of Prees Heath in Shropshire is proving a great success thanks to the enormous efforts of John Davis, Butterfly Conservation's Head of Reserves, and the Reserve Warden, Stephen Lewis. Large areas of heath-land habitat are being restored on land that was turned to arable use after the Second World War; it is exciting to see young heather plants shooting after ground preparation where potatoes recently grew, the objective is to extend the last Midlands refuge of the Silver-studded Blue.

The Society's membership continues its steady growth thanks to the work of Sandra Muldoon and the new Membership Officer, Hannah Cooper. Membership now stands at its highest ever total of 13,560 individuals.

On the fund raising front the Society had continued to enjoy major successes as a result of the hard work of David Bridges supported by Poppy Mackie. Sam Ellis had joined David to develop innovative projects to maintain the regional network of officers in England. A highlight of the teams' effort resulted from the involvement of the President, Sir David Attenborough, who launched the Stop Extinction Appeal at the start of 2008; the ambitious target was to raise £100,000, a figure that was now in sight.

A 40th Anniversary Ball took place in June with the objective of raising the profile of the Society while generating funds and new membership, a profit of more than £20,000 resulted and we are immensely grateful to all including the guest speaker Wilfred Emmanuel-Jones, the black farmer. Finally the Society is again tremendously indebted to NFU Mutual who have offered to match the final contributions to this fund as the year closes.

Butterfly Conservation's funds remain extremely healthy as a result of the supreme efforts of the Finance Director, Julie Williams, and David Hanson, the Honorary Treasurer. Frequent use of the term prudent has been heard in recent political speeches but it is pleasing to report that these two individuals and their dedicated team have been exactly that, thus enabling the Society to spend over £2 million on the conservation programme during the year. This accounts for 86% of the Society's expenditure. All funds received by Butterfly Conservation are wisely used to achieve concrete results in conservation.

The Society maintained a very high public profile thanks to the publicity team led by Lester Cowling. Butterfly Conservation had mentions in numerous TV and radio programmes and appeared frequently in national newspapers, the very successful Save Our Butterflies week was launched by the President, Sir David Attenborough. Lester has retired to a well deserved two day week but Louise Keeling will be joining the Society to take over his role. Thanks to the efforts of the IT Manager James Driscoll, the Society's new web site is packed with new information including details of major projects and a new identification section for butterflies and day flying moths. Thanks were expressed for the contribution of the branches and the thousands of volunteers that they motivate, a recent audit indicated that Butterfly Conservation volunteers contributed the equivalent of a staggering 380 full time staff and over £5.4 million worth of work.

Thanks were given to everyone in attendance and to all members not able to be present on the day. Thanks were also given to Trustees and particularly to the Chief Executive, Dr Martin Warren, and his superb team at Butterfly Conservation whose outstanding work benefits the Society greatly. The Chairman indicated that Butterfly Conservation is likely to face many challenges ahead, not least of which will be the global recession, however the Society will single mindedly maintain its ambitious plans to halt and reverse the decline in butterflies and moths.

6. Treasurer's Report and adoption of the Annual Report and Consolidated Accounts and Balance Sheet for the year ended 31 March 2007

David Hanson, Society Treasurer, proposed the adoption of the Annual Report and Consolidated Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2008 and these were approved unanimously (seconded by Marjory Taylor).

(a) Auditors

The Treasurer reported that this year the auditors did a superb job after the glitch of a year ago. That the Society's accounts and the financial procedures lying behind them are rigorously reviewed and gain a clean bill of health gives the Trustees great reassurance. This year's audit was rigorous and having a clean report to pass on to members was very pleasing. Thanks were expressed to the finance team and to the auditors.

(b) Accounts

The Society's accounts are now 59 pages long and an immense quality production. The document is a full report on everything the Society undertakes. The whole staff team and especially the Chief Executive and Finance Director, can take much credit for this document and more so for the tale that it tells.

(c) Branches

The Treasurer spoke of the amount of money raised and spent by branches being included in the accounts and an estimated value of the volunteer hours being included as well.

Special thanks were expressed for the work of Branch Treasurers and in particular for the swift and helpful reporting to Head Office of the figures needed for the accounts.

(d) Conservation

The Treasurer described good financial management as being important but not the ultimate aim of the Society. That is to conserve butterflies and moths and their habitats.

The Treasurer described several critical areas of the Society's finances as being reasons to celebrate. This included the accounts for the year to 31 March 2008, which showed over £2 million spent on conservation. The Treasurer also spoke of the accounts showing that 86 pence in every £1 of expenditure was spent on conservation as well as the accounts showing total income for the year of just over £3 million.

The Treasurer described the accounts as showing the Society's free cash reserves as just £75k below the target level trustees would ideally like to see. A year ago this gap was over £200k and two years ago it was over £400k.

The Treasurer went on to reflect on the accounts as being a portrait of the many successes of the organisation from the benefits of the work done by David Bridges on legacies, by a range of people on Gift Aid, by Sandra Muldoon on Membership, by Julie Williams on Expenditure Control, and by the whole team.

Forty years after its beginnings this charity is in the top 2% of the 200,000 charities in the UK with a report of great achievements and accounts showing robust financial health. Butterfly Conservation has, as a team, created something special in which great pride can be taken.

(e) **Banks**

The Treasurer cited several examples of mistakes and misjudgements by the Chief Executives of major world banks, as well as some of the circumstances that have led to problems with liquidity and the likely repercussions thereof.

(f) **Debt**

The Treasurer discussed national debt and the issues surrounding the potential resolution of this problem.

Butterfly Conservation does have cash reserves. One of the benefits of centralizing the Society's banking is that Julie Williams can now see on one screen all the charity's cash balances.

In the present year starting on 1 April it was clear to the Society that interest rates would fall. The Society, therefore, placed money on deposit for 3, 6, or 12 months to lock in decent interest rates for as long as possible.

To Julie Williams' cost control the Society has added a Treasury Management function. This has played a positive role in the present year and overall the Society expects to report good results at the AGM in Winchester next year.

(g) **Prospects**

The Treasurer discussed global financial conditions and the possibility of them worsening before they improve.

For Butterfly Conservation the message that has been taken on board regarding the budget for 2009/10 is that any income line may be under threat, most obviously the interest earned on the Society's cash balances. Cautious assumptions will be made in the budget and close monitoring of the Society's financial position will be undertaken.

The Society's reserves should go a long way to helping it through the global financial downturn and it is likely that in the next financial year the Society will see the benefit of amassing these reserves.

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

David Hanson proposed the reappointment of Buzzacott. Jenny Mallett seconded this. The appointment was approved and Council was authorised to fix their remuneration.

8. Chief Executive's Report

To celebrate Butterfly Conservation's 40th anniversary year, the Society has just produced its first ever Conservation Review covering the period 2000-2008, which summarises the main conservation projects it is involved with in an attractive and accessible way. The Conservation Review will be mailed out to Branch Chairs, Branch Organisers and Conservation Officers in January.

The report will also be mailed to policy makers and major partners to illustrate Butterfly Conservation's work and how the Society contributes to a great many aspects of conservation, land use and government policy. The Conservation Review will also be placed on the Society's website so that anyone can download and read a copy.

Special thanks expressed to all colleagues who contributed and especially Caroline Bulman and Nigel Bourn who organised and edited the report. It is a fitting tribute to the depth of the Society's work in its 40th year.

One of the main themes highlighted in the Conservation Review is the landscape scale projects which are now the centre-piece of the Society's conservation work. Thanks to new funding over the last year, Butterfly Conservation is now involved in over 76 landscapes across the UK, covering most threatened species. During the year vital new projects were started to save woodland

butterflies and moths in South-East England and to conserve threatened species in the Morecambe Bay limestone region of North-West England. Thanks were expressed to all who supported the appeal during the year. Superb project officers are now in post and the projects are beginning to make a real improvement on the ground.

Since the start of the new financial year, the Society has successfully raised funds for several new projects, including the Brecks of Norfolk (a crucial habitat for the Grey Carpet and other rare moths), a network of quarries in the South Midlands (vital refuges for the Small Blue), and in the North York Moors where vital work continues to save the Duke of Burgundy and Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary.

The Society continues to make good progress with Butterfly Conservation Europe and the first ever Climatic Risk Atlas of European butterflies, that will highlight the severe problems that butterflies will face under different climate change scenarios, is to be launched imminently. The Society is also working on a new Red List of European butterflies and the second meeting of Network Partners will be held in Germany in 2009. The Society has now formed an impressive network of 35 partner organisations in 32 countries, each of whom is doing excellent work to save butterflies and moths. The Society has also just received funding to identify Prime Butterfly Areas in Turkey, one of the countries in Europe with the richest yet least well known diversity of Lepidoptera.

The Society will continue much of the good work that is already underway, especially on key landscapes. However, new work includes:

- Taking a more proactive response to climate change by publishing a summary of the Society's work to date and making recommendations for how to adapt conservation policies.
- Publishing the first results of the Moths Count project which has already assembled 4 million records but will almost certainly double in the next few months. A marvellous response has been received from moth recorders and results are hoped to be made public in the form of online maps.
- On the membership front, the Society has plans to continue the steady growth in its membership. This might be a hard task given the economic downturn but the Society has good ideas to pursue and will be working closely with Branches in the New Year.

Butterfly Conservation has had another excellent year. Thanks were expressed to everyone in the organisation for making the 40th year such a success.

9. Council Elections

Maurice Avent, Hugo Brooke, David Dennis, David Dunbar, Mandy Gluth and Simon Spencer were to stand down by rotation. All were entitled and willing to offer themselves for re-election. In addition, Peter Bradbury had offered himself for election. All candidates had prepared short statements, were nominated, eligible and had made declarations. As there were sufficient vacancies, their election, en bloc, was proposed by Jenny Mallett and seconded by Marjory Taylor. Maurice Avent, Hugo Brooke, David Dennis, David Dunbar, Mandy Gluth and Simon Spencer were duly re-elected and Peter Bradbury was duly elected to serve on Council, for a period of three years.

10. Date of Next AGM

The date of the next AGM will be Saturday 21 November 2009. It will be hosted by the Hampshire Branch in Winchester.

Before closing the AGM, the Chairman reiterated his considerable thanks to Dudley Cheesman for his valuable contribution to Council and the Society.

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