



BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2010

Minutes of the meeting held at Churchill College, Cambridge Saturday 20th November 2010

Present

There were approximately 200 members present

Chairman's Introductory Remarks

Maurice Avent, Chairman of Butterfly Conservation, welcomed everyone to the AGM and Members' Day, hosted by the Cambridgeshire & Essex Branch of Butterfly Conservation. He thanked Mike Gittos, the Branch Chair, and the Branch Committee as well as the staff from Head Office.

The Chairman gave an introduction to the Members Day programme which was to begin with Richard Fox, Butterfly Conservation's Surveys Manager, talking about 'The Moths Count Results so far'. This was to be followed by a talk prepared by the local Cambridge Branch Conservation Officer, Vince Lea, on 'The Devil's Dyke Chalkhill Blue Recovery Project'. After lunch members would enjoy talks on local conservation topics, the first by Sharon Hearle, the Eastern England Regional Officer, on 'The Big Brecks and White-spotted Pinion Projects' and the second by Zoe Ringwood of Natural England on 'The Fishers Estuarine Moth Recovery Project'. The drawing of the branch raffle prizes, and the prize hamper, courtesy of NFU Mutual, would precede the Marsh Christian Awards, presented by David Dennis. The afternoon would culminate with a presentation by Kate Carver on 'The Great Fen Project'.

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 2010 edition, Issue 105 together with the booking form for the meeting.

1 Apologies

Apologies had been received from Trustees Jim Asher, Peter Bradbury, Marjory Taylor and Neil Thompson, also from Duncan Davidson, Lynn Fomison, Roy McCormick, Tim Norris and David Baker.

2 Minutes of the last AGM held on 21st November 2009 in Winchester

The minutes of the meeting had been published on the website, and made available on request. They were approved unanimously (proposed by Hugo Brooke and seconded by Martyn Davies).

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.

The amendments cover the number and rules of election of Trustees. These amendments had been circulated to the entire membership. The resolution was proposed by David Dennis and seconded by Dr Ian Small. The special resolutions were passed unanimously, and have been adopted within the Articles of Association.

5 Chairman's Report to Members

The Chairman, Maurice Avent, thanked the membership for permitting him to continue as Chairman of Butterfly Conservation. He said that Butterfly Conservation was recognised as being a major political player, helping to ensure that the Government was constantly reminded of the importance of conserving biodiversity across Britain. The new coalition government was still feeling its way, but had taken on board the need for landscape scale solutions. The huge voluntary support that BC receives made it a model for 'The Big Society'. The National Moth Recording Scheme dataset was now the largest on the National Biodiversity Network Gateway, and would become even larger when Les Hill had put on all 11.3 million records. If the 7m butterfly dataset was included BC had more than double the contribution of any other NGO. This data is being used to publish macro moth distribution maps, and a set of "State of Butterflies in the UK" maps using the work of Richard Fox in the new year.

The Chairman went on to examine why Butterfly Conservation was so successful. He concluded that the combination of a strong Senior Management Team led by Dr Martin Warren our Chief Executive, Julie Williams our Finance Director and Dr Nigel Bourn our Conservation Director, the effective Publicity Team, led by Louise Keeling, good IT support from James Driscoll and a huge invasion of Painted Ladies in May last year was the recipe to success. The website received over a third of a million hits last year, and has become BC's main recruitment tool. Maurice paid tribute to the support of his fellow Trustees, giving a particularly big thank you to David Dennis, the Vice Chairman. The Governance group has updated the job descriptions while drawing up terms of reference for Council, Trustees and its key committees. The result had been the special resolutions earlier proposed to ensure that the Council was constantly refreshed in its search for improvement. Martyn Davies and Marjory Taylor were both standing down as Trustees, who between them have served for nearly 30 years. Maurice thanked them both for all their contributions and their commitment to BC. He noted that it was gratifying that an advertisement for Trustees in *Butterfly* created a tremendous response with more than a dozen individuals applying, two of whom were proposed for election at this meeting.

Over the last financial year BC had spent over £2.3 million on the conservation programme, which was 86% of its expenditure. The Match Pot appeal helped BC to multiply members' donations ten-fold by utilising money from Landfill Community Funds. Work was started on a major new landscape project in Shropshire, around Beckley Woods in Sussex, and work in Norfolk was extended. There have many notable successes over the year – the last Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary colony in SE England has been saved from extinction, the number of Small Blue colonies near Leamington has doubled. However, both the SE Woodlands and

Moths Count projects were coming to the end of their funding. Both projects have been extremely successful, both in conservation terms and also in inspiring many individuals to get involved.

Butterfly Conservation Europe had published its work on European Grassland Butterfly Indicators which showed rapid species decline. It is timely news that BC Europe had been awarded its first ever EU grant, enabling it to employ staff. Sue Collins was working to improve EU legislation on biodiversity and CAP agri-environmental legislative changes being implemented in 2014.

Maurice highlighted two further achievements of the last year. The first was the International Symposium at Reading which was attended by over 300 delegates from 25 countries. Sir David Attenborough gave an inspirational and uplifting address. The message of gloom that the governments around the world had failed to meet their target of halting biodiversity loss by 2010, was lightened in that in the UK, where the Butterfly Monitoring Scheme has shown clear evidence that the Higher Level Stewardship Scheme is halting the decline of threatened species in England. The second highlight was the launch of the partnership with Marks and Spencer. The Big Butterfly Count resulted in more than 60,000 people visiting the website and submitting almost 16,000 records, making it the biggest ever single count of butterflies worldwide.

This summer membership reached the milestone of 15,000 members, with a retention rate of 92%. Ultimately, the success of BC was closely related to the ability to raise funds for vitally needed conservation work and to underpin such works with adequate Head Office support. David Bridges and the Fundraising team have worked hard and this year several legacies have been received, including one for £100,000. Times were very tough now and virtually all BC's income sources were under pressure yet David Bridges, Head of Fundraising, remained optimistic for the future; however the Chairman urged everyone to help at such a time by enrolling new members.

At the end of September 2009 during the annual Strategic weekend, Council considered what would be required to make a bold impact upon the overall decline of moths and butterflies. Fundamentally, the aim of the 2020 Vision is to see BC's membership and supporter base climb significantly and with turnover growing in parallel, so that BC could afford to fund its conservation projects sustainably. If all members recruited one new member every five years, by 2020 the membership would stand at over 100,000. Current economic circumstances do not bode well for such dreams but no time is bad for some quiet planning.

To conclude, Maurice announced that Mike Dilger had been recommended and approved as a Vice President by Council. He then presented Sue Collins with the Vice Presidential Award from 2009 when she was unable to attend the AGM.

6 Treasurer's report to members and adoption of the Annual Report & Consolidated Accounts and Balance Sheet for the year ended 31 March 2009

David Hanson, Honorary Treasurer, began by explaining that BC had been in good financial heart through 2009/10 and remained so. The financial income took a hit with the reduction in

interest rates from 5.0% to 0.5% and from the reductions in company dividends, but BC had good financial reserves. Dividends were rising again in the current year and interest rates were expected to move up by the end of next year.

David described four cornerstones on which the charity's financial security was based.

The first cornerstone was membership support. The increase in membership and the high retention rate, as well as the tremendous support for appeals remains the envy of other charities.

The second cornerstone was the fundraising effort, led by David Bridges, Head of Fundraising. The work on legacies over the past decade was bearing fruit. So far in 2010 BC had been notified of 11 legacies, the largest being £100,000. The fundraising effort was across a broad front, charitable trusts, statutory agencies, lottery funds and the like. The strategy was to seek to diversify the sources of income in order to reduce risk. BC was fortunate that David and his colleagues had the skills to submit high quality applications across this wide range.

The third cornerstone of our financial security was not directly about money but was the quality of BC's science and conservation. If we did not achieve results we would not retain members nor would we be so successful in our fundraising. Those who sent us grants and donations, kept a very close eye on how we used that money and what we achieved with it.

The final cornerstone was our Financial Management. Part of the Finance Team's job was to provide the figures to support grant applications, and to provide answers for the monitoring forms and reports demanded by donors as those grants are used, as well as producing the Management Accounts. The reassuring message from these Management Accounts was that BC has done what it said it would do in line with plans and budgets.

BC endeavoured to plan its expenditure so that the variation in income was smoothed. The financial commitment to projects was calculated for the current year, as well as the subsequent two, and the money set aside. Spending of the money received from legacies, life benefactors etc was spread over 5 or 10 years to provide a degree of long term security, and BC has built up its uncommitted reserves to close to £1million.

The grant income from statutory agencies made up the largest single slice of income. It was starting to fall and would fall further and faster in 2011/2012 and beyond. BC has secured a grant, albeit a smaller one than before, in Wales, and an application for a grant in Scotland has been submitted. DEFRA's budget has to be cut by roughly a third over 4 years and the first staff cuts at Natural England have been announced; the detailed picture on grants would not be clear for 6 months or so, but it wouldn't be good news. In summary, the economic forecast for 2011 was turbulent, but BC had a sound financial footing, although it would be severely tested in 2011/12.

David proposed the adoption of the Annual Report & Consolidated Accounts for the year to 31 March 2010, which was seconded by Dr Simon Spencer, and passed unanimously.

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

Dudley Cheesman proposed the reappointment of Buzzacott. David Dennis seconded this. The appointment was approved and Council was authorised to fix their remuneration.

8 Chief Executive Officer's Report

The Chief Executive Officer, Dr Martin Warren was delighted to report that this year, there had been many exciting examples of species recovering after decades of decline, thanks to the landscape projects.

The Pearl-bordered Fritillary has been re-introduced to two sites and has re-colonised several areas that have been opened up. In Hampshire, it re-colonised a site 2.5km from the colony at Bentley Wood, providing a crucial link to other restoration sites in this landscape.

The Duke of Burgundy was thought to be on the brink of extinction in Kent, with just two colonies and less than ten adults. But thanks to the project it was found on 9 sites, including several new sites that it has re-colonised and the discovery of some new colonies,

The Wood White too has had a good year and is flourishing thanks to new management by the Forestry Commission in Chiddingfold Forest, including on our reserve at Oaken Wood.

Our work to save the Heath Fritillary is also bearing fruit and the number of colonies in the Blean Woods of Kent has now returned to pre 1980 levels while populations are recovering well on Exmoor.

Thanks to our Two Moors Project, the Marsh Fritillary has begun to thrive again on Dartmoor and has spread to many new areas which are now being grazed appropriately by cattle. In Dorset, the Marsh Fritillary had its best year for decades thanks to our advice and new management under the Higher Level Scheme.

In the West Midlands, the Small Blue had been reduced to just three isolated colonies, but thanks to our work in Warwickshire, it has re-colonised the road verges around Southam and the number of colonies has doubled from three to six; a further ten sites have been restored and we hope will be colonised soon.

In Cumbria and Lancashire, we have developed the Morecambe Bay project to help save one of the last strongholds of the High Brown and Pearl-bordered Fritillaries. Thanks to our work, the High Brown colonised several newly coppiced areas this year and we fervently hope that the Pearl-bordered will respond soon.

Thanks to our Brecks project, the Grey Carpet Moth colonised four newly managed plots in the Norfolk Brecks, and one of these was unexpectedly colonised by the increasingly rare Forester moth.

In Wales, the High Brown Fritillary is reduced to a single site, near Bridgend. Thanks to the work of the Wales Team and South Wales Branch volunteers, numbers have increased sevenfold since management started in 1999 and the butterfly is thriving once again.

In the Wyre Forest, Wood White numbers have increased five-fold at Hurst Coppice and adults have spread along other managed rides. Pearl-bordered Fritillary numbers have increased four-fold along the pipeline route and two new colonies have become established nearby. Other species such as the Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary, Dingy Skipper and Drab Looper moth have also increased.

Thanks to our North York Moors project, the number of Duke of Burgundy colonies has increased three-fold around Helmsley and the Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary has expanded into several areas where grazing levels have been reduced.

In Scotland, thanks to our work under the Species Action Framework, the Pearl-bordered Fritillary has expanded into newly managed rides linking two small colonies in Auchenfad Forest in Dumfries. Over 2000 ha of potential Marsh Fritillary land has also been brought into favourable management under the Scottish Rural Development programme.

While in Northern Ireland, several large colonies of Marsh Fritillary have been found in Fermanagh and we are working with the Agriculture Department to get them into Agri-Environment Schemes.

There have also been some notable successes on our reserves. At Prestbury Hill in Gloucestershire, the Duke population hit a record high and spread onto the Masts part of the reserve. The Marsh Fritillary also re-colonised our reserve at Alners Gorse in Dorset thanks to recent scrub clearance by Branch volunteers. The Brown Hairstreak had its best year ever too.

At Prees Heath, our heathland restoration work is paying off and large areas of formerly arable land are now blooming with heather for the first time in 50 years. We hope that the habitat will be colonised by *Lasius* ants and thus enable the last surviving colony of the Silver-studded Blue in the West Midlands to expand.

Martin paid tribute to his staff colleagues who have worked tirelessly to gain these successes. He also thanked all those who provided so much time and skill to our work. He said he was extremely proud of all that BC had achieved and hoped to build on these successes in coming years. The positive results this year demonstrated that BC had the knowledge to be successful; it just needed the resources to maintain its effort in the core landscapes over a long enough period.

Martin closed by highlighting some of the main calendar events in the year ahead.

9 Council Elections

Dr Jim Asher, Mr Hugo Brooke, Mr David Dennis and Dr Ian Small were to stand down by rotation; all are entitled and willing to offer themselves for re-election. In addition Martyn Davies and Marjory Taylor have completed their term as Trustees, leaving two vacancies on Council. Martyn gave a short speech in which he said how privileged he felt to have served on the Council. He went on to explain that he had voted for the change in terms for trustees to encourage a continuous flow of people through Council, and that everyone should consider whether they could contribute to the running of the Society by standing as a Trustee.

Two new candidates were standing for election, Andrew Brown and Vanessa Williams. All candidates had prepared a short statement in the form of an Election Address; they were nominated, eligible and had made declarations. As there were sufficient vacancies, their election, en bloc, was proposed by Mandy Gluth and seconded by Dr Simon Spencer. Dr Jim Asher, Hugo Brooke, David Dennis, Dr Ian Small were duly re-elected and Andrew Brown and Vanessa Williams 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 19 November 2011. It will be hosted by

the Gloucestershire Branch.