

Bat Conservation Trust



Minutes of the Annual General Meeting (AGM) 2018

National Bat Conference, Nottingham University, Nottingham
Saturday 8th September 2018

David Gibbons (BCT Chair) chaired the meeting and covered the rules for voting:

- He pointed out that spare AGM papers, annual report and annual review (to be approved at this AGM) were available at the front of the room.
- He advised that as proxy voting had been made available, the Chair would call for a poll on every resolution so that the proxy votes could be included.
- He described the manner of the poll – that it would be by a show of hands (in which the voting card should be held up) to which the proxy votes would be added.
- Two of those who had submitted proxy votes had appointed the Chair as their proxy. And one other member had appointed BCT Partner Bat Group Nominated Trustee Ani Binet.
- He checked if anyone present had also submitted a postal vote; it was confirmed that nobody had.

53 voting members attended at the start of the meeting, two members arrived after resolution 1 (total members present: 55) and one member after resolution 2 (total members present: 56).

Total voting members at AGM: 56

Total proxy votes: 3

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from: Robert Upex, Roger Mortlock, Rupert Lancaster, Sarah Escott and Elizabeth Ferrell.

2. Minutes of the AGM 2017

The chair presented the 2017 AGM minutes and asked if there were any amendments to be made. No points were raised and consequently no amendments made.

To approve the minutes for the 2017 AGM (**resolution 1**)

Proposer: Kirsty Park

Seconder: Ani Binet

For [53] Against [0] Abstain [3]

Two members entered the room after this resolution had been approved, which brought the total members present eligible to vote to 55.

3. Annual Report of the Board of Trustees 2017-2018

David Gibbons, BCT Chair, gave a presentation reviewing the year. He highlighted the following from the Annual Report, in the context of BCT's Strategic objectives

Discover:

- In 2017 a total of nearly 2000 sites were surveyed by nearly 1,000 volunteers, which is more than double the 1997 figure when the NBMP started. Eighty percent of volunteers are now using our online recording portal to return their survey data.
- This year NBMP data have contributed to a range of research studies and peer-reviewed publications, including 'Monitoring the biodiversity of regions: key principles and possible pitfalls' in Biological Conservation; and 'The State of UK's Bats 2017'. Our data are being used in four PhD studies:
- *'Do agri-environment schemes enhance biodiversity under the challenge of agricultural intensification?' at the University of Bristol; 'The use of ecoacoustics to understand anthropogenic impacts on biodiversity' at University College London (UCL); 'The potential of UK bats as agents in pest control' at the University of Greenwich; and 'Modelling the drivers of bat population change' at the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (CEH) and UCL.*
- We've been working on developing a new survey for the NBMP, the British Bat Survey (BBatS), in collaboration with the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO). This survey will draw upon the latest developments in low cost acoustic sensors, acoustic sound recognition, and online feedback. It has been developed in collaboration with researchers from University College London, University of Oxford and the BTO. The new survey will enable us to calculate population trends for more bat species than is currently possible and engage a wider range of volunteers than ever before. You heard more about this in Alison's talk earlier today.
- We made two scientific awards in 2017/18 – the first recipient of the Kate Barlow Award was Kristen Lear, whose research project focuses on conserving the endangered Mexican long-nosed bat, which is a rare but vital pollinator. In 2017 The Vincent Weir Award was awarded to Jeremy Froidevaux for his work in furthering our understanding of bats in forests and agricultural landscapes. And of course we have had the two new winners for these awards announced at the conference today.

Act:

- We have made good progress in the area of bats and agriculture – something we have wanted to do for some time. The Grey Long-eared Bat Project, as part of 'Back from the Brink', is working with landowners to improve foraging and connectivity around the most isolated maternity roosts for this species. In the first year of action on the ground a large number of landowners have committed to changing their management to benefit this species. We are working with facilitation funds in south and east Devon and have also found

that many landowners have been willing to make changes without the support of Countryside Stewardship.

- BCT continues to be an active member of Wildlife and Countryside Link (WCL), Wales Environment Link (WEL) and Scottish Environment Link (SEL), as well as a supporter of Greener UK, with BCT's Wildlife Crime Officer and Wales Officer taking active roles as chair or vice chair of sub groups in England and Wales.
- Promotion of bats and their protection is partly carried out through our Species Champion MPs, MSPs and Assembly Members (England – 3 Species Champions, Wales 2 Species Champions, Scotland – 7 Species Champions). In February 2018 BCT organised an event at the House of Lords on Bats and People during which speeches, displays of BCT's work and live bats were used to champion bat conservation, including our work on 'better implementation' of the legislation. The event was well received and new, influential contacts were established.

Inspire:

- Our National Bat Helpline fielded 15,133 enquiries about bats in 17/18, providing crucial support to householders, church communities and those who have found a bat in need of help. Of these, 2,337 came through the Out of Hours volunteer service.
- Strong relationships with Bat Groups are at the heart of our work, and without support from volunteers, we couldn't achieve our objectives. BCT has a formal relationship with 88 bat groups (69 Partner groups, and 19 Network groups).
- BCT delivered 26 training courses in 2017-18, including two new courses: the 'Bearing Witness for Wildlife' project offered training in recognising and reporting wildlife crime or acting as a witness, and 'Kaleidoscope Pro' was delivered in collaboration with Wildlife Acoustics.
- In the absence of a National Bat Conference last year, BCT co-organised the Autumn Swarming Bat Conference with the Vincent Wildlife Trust and the Derbyshire Bat Conservation Group. And we co-organised the second National Bat Care Conference in February with Maggie Brown from West Yorkshire Bat Hospital and Bat Care News. And of course there were the usual regional/country conferences – during the report period we had conferences in Wales and Scotland, as well as the North Conference and the East of England Conference.

Strengthen:

- It's been an encouraging year for us in terms of our membership, supporters and volunteers – at the end of the financial year The Bat Conservation Trust had a total of 6,351 members. That includes the support of 39 corporate members – six more than last year. This year seven new Life Members joined The Bat Conservation Trust, raising our total to 53.

The Future:

- Continue to improve the evidence base and to provide solutions for bat conservation, through scientific research, monitoring and cross sector partnerships
- Be stronger than ever in our advocacy, speaking up for strong policy and legislation protecting bats in these times of rapid political change.
- And we need to increase engagement with and understanding of bats by the public and the media, through our National Bat Helpline, through projects such as Back from the Brink and with the help of the many bat volunteers around the country.

David thanked all of the members, supporters, funders and partners who make BCT's work possible.

To approve the Annual Report of the Board of Trustees 2017-2018 (**resolution 2**)

Proposer: Shirley Thompson

Seconder: Peta Marshall

For [58] Against [0] Abstain [0]

One member entered the room after this resolution had been approved, which brought the total eligible members present to vote to 56.

4. Annual Accounts and Auditors' Report 2017-2018

Tom Andrews, BCT's Treasurer provided an overview of the work towards a balanced budget. He was pleased to report that it has broadly been a positive year on the funding front:

- Strong year end picture despite challenges relating to statutory funding
- Despite limited fundraising capacity, income has remained steady
- Continued controlled expenditure
- Continued with strategic approach: Medium term approach to investment – average of 6% annual income and investing in core strategic BCT projects

The funding climate remains challenging. Statutory funding is particularly pressured, and some of the large funders such as HLF, have dwindling pots of resource with increasing competition.

Following the restructure to reduce expenditure three years ago, the senior management team, the finance and ops team and the fundraising/comms team have been significantly under capacity and this was not sustainable. Therefore, Trustees this year have taken a decision to invest in three areas – a Head of Operations, a Fundraising and Development Officer, and additional comms support.

We will continue to budget an average of 6% investment income per year, which allows us to plan more strategically.

Member Tricia Scott asked how reliant is BCT's income on bat group donations. She asked for clarification on what is the proportion of donations from bat groups on the overall BCT income. She also asked if BCT could provide a comparison between 2017-18 and the previous year. Tom Andrews indicated that the comparison of voluntary income is in the notes of the accounts, but that it did not drill down to the detail of bat group donations. Tom noted that in 2017-18 voluntary income was slightly less than the year before but BCT received larger grants. He added that BCT's expenditure was slightly higher in 2017-18 but this was due to a strategic investment in funds. Kit Stoner, BCT's CEO also added that BCT had a house bestowed which was recognised in the accounts in 2016/17, even though the process is ongoing. Tricia Scott wanted to know specifically about income from bat groups (what proportion of the year's total income came from bat groups and which was from other non-bat group sources) and was enquiring how sustainable it was for bat groups to continue donating. Kit Stoner replied that she did not have that level of detail to hand but would make it available after the meeting.

Information provided post AGM but included in these minutes for information: BCT can confirm that a total of £4000 was donated by Bat Groups in 2017/18 (total voluntary donations were £240,326 this includes unrestricted donations, legacies and membership), as compared to £6705 in 2016/17 (total voluntary donations were £330,123 this includes unrestricted donations, legacies and membership)

Member Pam Worrall asked if the Vincent Weir gift helped this year and should BCT do any future proofing to safeguard funds? Tom Andrews replied that BCT's Vincent Weir endowment and other investments were helping to future proof BCT's income. He said that BCT had a very strong balance sheet and that members should feel confident that BCT was financially sustainable for the medium term and that trustees would keep a close eye on the funding environment and any longer term threats to income and expenditure to ensure BCT's long term security.

To approve the Annual Accounts and Auditors' Report 2017-2018 (**resolution 3**)

Proposer: Nils Bouillard

Seconder: Kirsty Park

For [59] Against [0] Abstain [0]

5. Appointment of Auditors

Trustees continue to be satisfied with the overall level of service provided by our current Auditors, Sayer Vincent and propose that they are retained for the next year's audit.

Member Ed Wells asked when was the last time BCT changed auditors. Kit Stoner (BCT's CEO) explained that we had used the same auditors for a number of years, but that there had been a change in managing partner and audit manager in the past couple of years ago. Ed Wells noted that this should be reviewed and looked at from time to time. Kit said that we would be looking to review at some point over coming 2-3 years but need to have capacity in place first.

To approve the Appointment of Auditors (**resolution 4**)

Proposer: Bob Cornes

Seconder: Ed Wells

For [59] Against [0] Abstain [0]

6. Auditors' Remuneration

To authorise the Trustees to determine the Auditors' remuneration for next year's audit. (**resolution 5**).

To provide some context to those at the AGM Kit Stoner (BCT's CEO) noted that this year (2017-18) the Auditor's remuneration was £7,750, in 2016-17 it was £7,500 and the previous year £7,200.

Proposer: Ed Wells

Seconder: Peta Marshall

For [58] Against [0] Abstain [1]

7. Election of Trustees

New trustees

Two trustees, Steve Parker and Sarah Escott, are leaving at this AGM after serving three consecutive periods of three years as Partner Bat Group Nominated Trustee and Ordinary Trustee, respectively. The Board of Trustees would like to record their sincere thanks to Steve and Sarah for their contribution to BCT.

The Board of Trustees is therefore pleased to nominate Steve Roe as Partner Bat Group Nominated Trustee, along with Jean Matthews as Ordinary Trustee.

- Steve Roe – nominated for election as a Partner Bat Group Nominated Trustee (**Resolution 6**).

Proposer: Lisa Worledge

Seconder: Jonathan Whitehurst

For [59] Against [0] Abstain [0]

- Jean Matthews – nominated for election as an Ordinary Trustee (**Resolution 7**).

Proposer: Shirley Thompson

Seconder: Greg Carson

For [59] Against [0] Abstain [0]

Existing trustees

All Board of Trustees members are eligible to stand for up to three consecutive periods of three years, before they must stand down from the Board for at least one year.

Five trustees are standing for re-election at this AGM and the Board of Trustees is pleased to make the following proposal, for Prof Kirsty Park, Roger Mortlock, Steve Markham, and Dr Abigail Entwistle to be re-elected as Ordinary Trustees and for Bob Cornes to be re-elected as a Partner Bat Group Nominated Trustee.

The Board of Trustees is pleased to put forward:

- Prof Kirsty Park – nominated for re-election as Ordinary Trustee (**Resolution 8**)

Proposer: Nils Bouillard

Seconder: Colin Faulkner

For [59] Against [0] Abstain [0]

- Roger Mortlock – nominated for re-election as Ordinary Trustee (**Resolution 9**)

Proposer: Kit Stoner

Seconder: Lisa Worledge

For [59] Against [0] Abstain [0]

- Steve Markham – nominated for re-election as Ordinary Trustee (**Resolution 10**)
Proposer: Amanda Adebisi **Seconder:** Jean Matthews

For [59] Against [0] Abstain [0]

- Dr Abigail Entwistle – nominated for re-election as Ordinary Trustee (**Resolution 11**)
Proposer: Julia Hanmer **Seconder:** Carol Williams

For [59] Against [0] Abstain [0]

- Bob Cornes – nominated for re-election as a Partner Bat Group Nominated Trustee (**Resolution 12**)
Proposer: Jane Harris **Seconder:** Ed Wells

For [59] Against [0] Abstain [0]

Officer Trustees

Due to Sarah Escott stepping down, the board of trustees is pleased to nominate Dr Abigail Entwistle to replace Sarah as Vice Chair.

- Abigail Entwistle – nominated for election as Vice Chair (**Resolution 13**).
Proposer: Kit Stoner **Seconder:** Bob Cornes

For [59] Against [0] Abstain [0]

8. Review of membership rates

Membership categories and rates have remained unchanged at BCT for the last six years. The last time rates were reviewed was in 2012. Based on the increases made to membership rates in 2012 and the current offer of other similar-sized species NGO's the trustees propose the current membership rates and the creation of a new membership category as follows:

Membership Type	RATES IN 2011	Increase (%)	CURRENT RATES (MAY 2018)	PROPOSED NEW RATES	Increase (%)
Individual Membership	£24.50	22.5%	£30 p.a. /£2.50 p.m.	£33 p.a. /£2.75 p.m.	10%
Benefactor	£50	20%	£60 p.a./ £5 p.m.	£72 p.a. / £6 p.m	20%
Family Membership	£33	9%	£36.00 p.a. /£3 p.m.	£42 p.a. / £3.50 p.m.	16%
Young Batworkers Club	£9	33.3%	£12.00 p.a.	£15.00 p.a.	25%
Teacher/Youth Leader	£18.50	23%	£24.00 p.a. / £2 p.m.	£27.00 / £2.25	12.5%
Life	£500	20%	£600	£700	33%
Corporate	Split between small/large companies		£200	£250	25%
Overseas membership	+ £6.00		+ £6.00	+ £6.00	

Student Membership	NA		N/A	£24.00 p.a. / £2 p.m.	
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Member Shirley Thompson asked why did the Young Batworker's Club membership had the highest percentage increase of all memberships. Director of Fundraising and Communications Joe Nunez-Mino explained it was to cover the direct costs of the Young Batworker's Club membership.

Member Kate Sharma asked for clarification on the overseas membership as from the table it looked it looks like it hasn't been increased. Director of Fundraising and Communications Joe Nunez-Mino explained the £6 is added to the selected membership fee for any overseas person that joins, to help with postage costs. This surcharge will remain unchanged as a proportion of members receive the magazines via email.

To approve an increase of membership rates (**Resolution 14**)

Proposer: Nils Bouillard

Secunder: Mary Barnes

For [59] Against [0] Abstain [0]

To approve the creation of a new membership category – Student Membership (£24 p.a. / £2 p.m) (**Resolution 15**)

Member Pam Worrall commented that £24 for a student membership sounded quite high and asked if BCT had done any market research. Director of Fundraising and Communications Joe Nunez-Mino confirmed he did do market research and the new student membership rate will still be lower than other species NGOs researched.

Proposer: Steve Roe

Secunder: Jonathan Whitehurst

For [59] Against [0] Abstain [0]

Member Beth Jasper enquired about the possibility of creating a joint membership between BCT and bat groups, similar to what the Mammal Society does. Director of Fundraising and Communications, Joe Nunez-Mino, explained this might prove logistically challenging; bat groups are not affiliated to BCT, different bat groups have different membership fees, and different bat groups have different capacities to manage memberships too. It is something that could be looked into in the future but for now not a possibility. At the moment whenever someone joins they are asked if they are happy for their contact details to be passed on to their local bat group so they can ask them how to get more involved or about membership. Another BCT member present at the AGM said at this point that they were part of the Mammal Society and that they believed this no longer happened with their memberships because the groups were independent and it was difficult to organise.

Member Greg Carson asked how much extra revenue the new membership rates will bring in. Director of Fundraising and Communications Joe Nunez-Mino replied it was an increase of approximately £13,000/year. Joe added that the implementation of the new membership rates won't be implemented until next year and BCT members will of course be notified beforehand.

9. Any other notified business

No other business was notified.

Question and Answer session

There being no notified business, David Gibbons asked if anyone had any questions for BCT staff or trustees.

Member Maggie Andrews asked if it would be possible to ask delegates if they want to submit an abstract or a poster during the booking process. Training and Conferences manager Naomi Webster clarified that for this year she actually had enough abstracts submitted before the bookings were opened and not enough time on the programme to fit them all so she didn't need to have another call out for abstracts. She will also look into the possibility of adding a question about poster submissions to the booking system.

Member Kevin Wells asked about sharing the slides from the conference talks to facilitate passing information back to the rest of the bat group. Training and Conferences manager Naomi Webster explained that this was at the discretion of the speakers as there were a number of factors affecting whether the slides could be shared, but she would ask the speakers and share what they agreed to.

Member Nathalie Cossa suggested that BCT should clarify what support it has available for bat groups as she recently asked for support and was told BCT couldn't help her. Lisa Worledge (BCT's Partnerships Officer) asked for more clarification on the query as she didn't recall receiving a request for help from Leicestershire Bat Group recently. Lisa explained that her role within BCT is to support bat groups as much as capacity and resources allow and reminded that any bat group related queries should come directly to her, and also to get in touch with her if there were issues with how other people in BCT had dealt with enquiries.

David Gibbons thanked and the AGM closed at 18.15.

Minutes: Andreia Correia da Costa (Fundraising and Membership Officer)