



Minutes of the Annual General Meeting (AGM) 2022

Hybrid event – Saturday 24th October 2022

Kit Stoner (BCT CEO) welcomed everyone and asked for any non-members present in the room to sit on one side of the room so it is easier for vote counting. She also covered some house keeping rules for Zoom (explained basic zoom controls, and asked members to remain muted) and asked if all voting members in the room had pink voting cards and proceeded to count how many voting members were in the room (displayed by raising pink voting cards up).

Jean Matthews (BCT Chair) chaired the meeting and covered both Zoom and in-person rules for voting:

- For members in the Zoom room, you will remain muted but if you have a question/comment relating to the AGM proceedings or need to raise a point of order, please use the chat by writing 'QUESTION' or 'POINT OF ORDER' and a member of staff will ask you to unmute yourself so you can ask the question/raise the point of order. If you would rather not speak in public, you can put 'READ' in capitals at the beginning of the question and the moderators will know to read it out themselves. If you do speak please introduce yourself first so this can be recorded in the minutes. If you are in the room and need to raise a point of order please do raise your hand and wait for a microphone to be brought to you.
- While the AGM is taking place please reserve the online chat for AGM related questions only. If you need technical assistance please email members@bats.org.uk or call 020 7820 7181. You will be able to catch up with people in the online chat at the end of the formal business for a bit should you wish to do so.
- If there are any non-members here or on zoom please remember you cannot propose, second or vote for resolutions.
- A reminder for family members: If you have a family membership and your respective family member is also attending the AGM please amend your Zoom name so it is clear there are 2 people voting (e.g. Smiths x2 or Smith & Brown). If you need help with this please a BCT member of staff to help with this now (marked as Co-host in the chat).
- And speaking of voting, we will be voting on 8 resolutions and for each a member needs to propose it to go to a vote and a second member needs to second it:
 - If you wish to propose a resolution please use the 'Chat' and write 'I PROPOSE' or speak up if you are in the room
 - If you wish to second a resolution please use the 'Chat' and write 'I SECOND' or speak up if you are in the room
 - If you are on Zoom and wish to propose or second a resolution make sure you are sending the message on the chat to everyone rather a private message to other participant
 - Please also note that your Zoom name must be valid (i.e. it needs to display your first and last name)

- The first person to type/shout will be the proposer/seconder and this will be announced by the Chair or a member of staff.
- We will then ask for members to vote for each resolution. If you are on Zoom you will see a poll pop up on your screen and you simply need to select the option that suits you on the screen. So it is recommended that you have the speaker view option selected. You can change this either on the right or left hand side of your screen, depending on which device you are using. If you are in the room, voting is by a show and count of pink voting cards. Does everyone have a pink voting card? There are no proxy votes.
- Note for Family members in Zoom: if each member within a Family Membership wishes to vote differently please do not answer the poll and use the chat to let BCT know what each of your votes will be (e.g.: John Smith votes in favour and Mary Smith abstains).
- If for some reason you get disconnected during the AGM and have missed voting on a resolution (and you do wish to continue to vote) please call 020 7820 7181. AGM proceedings will pause briefly for 5 minutes until you are able to re-join so we can count your vote. When you reconnect again you will be placed in a waiting room and then a member of staff will let you in as soon as it is suitable. If you are unable to connect within 5 minutes of being disconnected the member of staff that is with you on the phone can give you instructions on how you can dial in.

Total proxy votes: no proxy votes

Total in-person voting members: 27/28 (one extra person entered after agenda item 2 but then another one left after agenda item 3)

Total Zoom voting members: 10

Agenda item 1 – Apologies

Apologies were received from: Nick Tomlinson and Christine Sherlock.

Agenda item 2 – Minutes of the AGM 2021

The chair presented the 2021 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 2021 AGM (**Resolution 1**)

Proposer: Kirsty Park

Secunder: Ani Binet

In person: For [25] Against [0] Abstain [2]

Online: For [10] Against [0] Abstain [0]

Total: For [35] Against [0] Abstain [2]

Agenda item 3 – Annual Report of the Board of Trustees 2021-22

Jean Matthews, BCT Chair, gave a presentation reviewing some highlights from the annual report for the period April 2021 – March 2022.

Discover:

- The NBMP is the longest running purpose-built, multi-species monitoring programme for mammals in the UK and relies on a nationwide network of citizen scientists. In 2020, participation was understandably reduced as a result of COVID-19 restrictions, but still a total of 1,340 sites were surveyed by 850 volunteers. Bat detector and sound analysis workshops were taken online, with 13 workshops providing training for over 400 volunteer surveyors.
- The results from a volunteer questionnaire are informing a new NBMP volunteer engagement strategy, which aims to improve the effectiveness of our volunteer engagement and communications and for engage more diverse audiences.
- We have continued to develop our passive acoustic monitoring programme, with woodland monitoring, Nightwatch, and government of Jersey.
- We have built on the success of our 2019 acoustic monitoring pilot with Forestry England, by working with Forest Research to integrate passive acoustic monitoring of bats to the National Forest Inventory. In summer 2020 we partnered with the Government of Jersey to deliver the Jersey Bat Survey, a passive acoustic bat monitoring survey across Jersey.
- Over the last year we have been developing Nightwatch – a free, inclusive, tech-enabled night-time biodiversity survey open to all regardless of background, experience, or physical ability. Nightwatch has the dual aims of collecting robust, locally focused biodiversity data, while at the same time engaging a wide range of people from diverse backgrounds and abilities.
- We made two scientific awards in 2020/21.
 - The Kate Barlow Award was awarded to PhD student Laura Torrent of the Universidade do Porto, Portugal. Laura's project will provide a thorough evaluation of the bat diversity of Equatorial Guinea, a hugely understudied region located in one of the most important biodiversity hotspots in Africa. This work will provide critical information for local authorities and support their efforts to protect its bat species. This project will use genetic techniques to assess an entirely unstudied voucher collection of over 1,000 bat specimens collected across Equatorial Guinea in the 1990s.
 - The Vincent Weir Scientific Award was awarded to Rana Khayat (from Manchester Metropolitan University) for her PhD project which characterised the causes and effects of wing tears for the first time, in common pipistrelles and other UK bat species. Rana collected her data from bat carers, who sent pictures of bat wings and swabs from injured bat wings.
- In 2020 we carried out a public consultation on 'Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines and hosted meetings with the Technical Review Board. An updated version of the guidelines is planned for spring 2022. This has been delayed due to the need to divert capacity to the Earned Recognition Project – more on that shortly.).
- BCT also sits on the Advisory Group for the production of an update of the Bat Mitigation Guidelines alongside a variety of stakeholders including the Statutory Nature Conservation Bodies. The results of our mitigation project will be fed into the new guidelines. These guidelines are now available as a beta version so that feedback can be received.

- BCT is also working with Natural England and CIEEM on the pilot for a new transformative approach to licensing mitigation work in England that impacts on bats, which will streamline the licensing process, raise professional standards and improve outcomes for bats. This approach is known as Earned Recognition.
- Earned Recognition works on the basis of assessing and accrediting a consultant's competence in undertaking survey work and designing effective mitigation so that, by using an accredited consultant, developers can experience a more streamlined licensing process for their scheme or project.
- The pilot for this project is now underway.

Act:

- We have continued to work with the different sectors, two of those being agriculture and the built environment.
- The Grey Long-eared Bat Project, as part of 'Back from the Brink', has been granted an extension until August 2021. The project has continued to work with farmers and landowners to improve foraging habitat (primarily species rich grassland) and connectivity, throughout the project areas. BCT was fortunate to gain Green Recovery Challenge Fund funding, working in partnership with East Devon AONB to continue and expand on the work of the Grey Long-eared Bat project, continuing to work with farmers and landowners on habitat improvement and connectivity.
- We held our first remote Built Environment technical workshops focussed on bat roost mitigation and lessons learned, promoting sharing best practice as part of the new Roost webpages launched September 2020. Being online meant the workshops attracted over 150 attendees from right across the UK. Workshops were followed by the newly launched Roost Awards. The winner was 'Avoidance of swarming site loss during restoration works at Cliveden' by Bernwood ESC Ltd.
- We continue to work very closely with other environmental NGOs through the four Environment Links and Greener UK to pool resources and expertise to get a strong and effective voice for bat conservation across the United Kingdom.
- With the UK finally leaving the EU and the conclusion of the transition period at the end of 2020, this has resulted in an unprecedented amount of collaborative work on various elements of the (Westminster) Environment Bill, as well as trying to ensure that gaps in Governance arrangements and the loss of environmental principles are properly filled – this work is ongoing and is undertaken alongside our work in the other devolved administrations where possible. We have also joined with other NGOs to express concerns around proposed planning reforms.
- BCT has run a number of campaigns to get our supporters to write to their elected politicians to stand up for bats and environmental protection more widely.

Inspire:

- The Helpline fielded a total of 14 857 enquiries (calls, emails and letters) in 2020-21.
- 11,840 of these were dealt with by Helpline staff and 3,017 came through the Out of Hours volunteer service.
- In 2020-21 we launched a new blog for UK Bat Care Network members as a way of sharing stories, news and best practice with the volunteers who rescue bats.

- Due to a lack of funding we have had to make some changes to the way that we run the Helpline service. This summer, we extended the Out of Hours service, so that volunteers took bat care calls during working hours as well as evenings and weekends.
- BCT could not deliver all that it does for bat conservation without the support of bat groups across the British Islands. We have a formal relationship with 88 groups across the British Islands, with new groups forming this year in England and Scotland.
- We were delighted to welcome Abby Packham to BCT, at the beginning of February 2021, as our new Bat Groups Officer. Abby, along with Elisabeth Ferrell (Scottish Bat Officer), Claudia Gebhardt (Scottish Bat Officer Maternity Cover) and Steve Lucas (Wales Officer), and provide a range of support to groups, including talks, training, outreach materials (e.g. leaflets), insurance, advice and guidance.
- Looking ahead, we are working on how we can better support bat groups through training and expansion of accessible resources, to encourage them to make the most of the increasing virtual opportunities. We would also like to encourage uptake of existing partnerships and develop more collaborative projects that engage with the bat groups, as well as finding new ways of showcasing the wonderful work being done locally in front-line bat conservation, throughout the British Islands.
- BCT delivered 25 training courses in 2020-21 for a combined audience of 349 people. All but two of these courses were held online due to COVID-19.
- As a result of the pandemic, we adapted a number of courses for online delivery including the Volunteer Bat Roost Visitor Trainer course, Bats for Building Professionals and our Lantra accredited Scoping Surveys for Arborists course. All received positive feedback.
- The National Bat Conference was held online for the first time last year and was attended by 278 people including speakers from New Zealand, India, Europe, the US and Mexico. The programme was adapted for online and included panel discussions on Climate Change and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. The feedback from participants was positive and moving forward, we plan to utilise a hybrid format incorporating online elements to our in-person events.
- The conference was part of the 2020 'BatFest', a series of online events which ran from International Bat Night on 29 August to 30 September. Chris Packham attended the launch event which had 278 attendees. BatFest events in 2020 had a combined live audience of over 1000 people across 10 online events.

Strengthen:

- Despite the challenging year, membership has continued to grow steadily throughout 2020/21. We conducted a membership survey in Summer 2020 which has been useful to understand more about who our members are, what motivates their interest and support of bat conservation. BCT is committed to encouraging more supporters to take up membership and support our work. Larger and more representative membership will make us more relevant and increase our ability to influence key stakeholders.
- There was a slight decrease in Adopt a Bat subscribers although it remains popular and generates valuable income.
- We have continued to grow our social media presence – it is an important way to raise awareness of bats and bat conservation, update supporters on BCT's work and collaborative projects and raise funds with a broad audience.

- The link between COVID-19 and bats has generated a lot of misunderstanding and misinformation which has forced us to divert considerable resources to managing communications including supporting other individuals and organisations in the conservation sector. Our response has been to educate by providing factual science-based information in a variety of forms suitable for different audiences. This included the Don't Blame Bats campaign with our colleagues in the Spanish Association for the Conservation and Research of Bats.
- The second season of our podcast BatChat launched in October 2020 and 10 episodes were published. So far this great resource has had over 20,000 downloads.

We are currently working on our new strategy, and that will inform our work over the coming years. But we know that we need to:

- Continue to improve the evidence base for bats, using new technologies and ground-breaking science, to provide solutions for bat conservation
- Be stronger than ever in our advocacy, speaking up for robust policy and legislation protecting bats.
- We need to increase engagement with and understanding of bats by the public and the media. We need to proactively work to engage new audiences with bat conservation.
- Continue to invest in fundraising and diversify our income streams, to put us in a strong position for our next 30 years!

To approve the Annual Report of the Board of Trustees 2021-2022 (**Resolution 2**)

Proposer: Mathew Terry

Seconded: Nik Knight

28 people in the room [one extra person entered after agenda item 2]

In person: For [28] Against [0] Abstain [0]

Online: For [10] Against [0] Abstain [0]

Total: For [38] Against [0] Abstain [0]

Agenda item 4 – Annual Accounts and Auditors' Report 2021-22

Ruth Waters, BCT's treasurer, provided an overview of the work towards a balanced budget. It was a challenging year for charity sector:

- Despite the continued economic uncertainty, which has impacted heavily on the charity sector, BCT has continued its vital work. The economic downturn has meant we ended the year with a slight decrease in funds, this was due to a loss on investments reflected at the time of our financial statements.
- We achieved a small surplus in unrestricted funds through careful management of our finances due to cost-cutting measures such as a change in office space, and by continuing to invest in fundraising. However, the scale of the surplus shows we must continue with this cautious spending and diversification of income streams.

- For the year ended 31 March 2022, income was £1,632,007 (2021: £1,568,217) and expenditure was £1,595,153 (2021: £1,412,574), leading to net surplus for the year of £36,854 (2021: £155,643).
- Taking into account losses on investments of £57,186 (2021: gains of £483,565), the net movement in funds for the year was a decrease of £20,332 (2021: an increase of £639,208). This really reflects the global issues going on at the moment, such as the war in Ukraine and we expect markets to continue to be quite volatile going forward this year.
- We must continue with our cautious spending measures and to invest in our fundraising, and diversifying our income streams.
- We are also reviewing our investments to ensure we have good returns from our ethical investments.
- Investments total £2,580,593 (2021: £2,603,514) at 31 March 2022. The aim of these funds is to provide a steady additional annual income stream to support our work, helping to reduce the risks associated with our reliance on project funding. Both this and the prior year were unpredictable in terms of investments and global stock markets were severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- For budgeting purposes, BCT assume a 6% total return per year to take into account market fluctuations. Investments are expected to meet our ethical criteria with returns reported on via a benchmark.
- We have increased the experience of the Board of Trustees around finance. And we have set up a finance and audit committee to ensure that this has sufficient scrutiny and support going forward.

Question from Greg Carson: Was the investment income in the pie charts?

Answer from Kit Stoner: No

To approve the Annual Accounts and Auditors' Report 2021-2022 (**Resolution 3**)

Proposer: Ray Lancashire

Seconded: Sam Dyer

27 people in the room [one person left after agenda item 3]

In person: For [27] Against [0] Abstain [0]

Online: For [10] Against [0] Abstain [0]

Total: For [37] Against [0] Abstain [0]

Agenda item 5 – Appointment of Auditors

BCT appointed a new auditor in 2020, HW Fisher. We are broadly satisfied with the overall level of service provided by HW Fisher across the engagement but may wish to review other options.

To authorise the Trustees to choose Auditors for next year's audit (**Resolution 4**)

Proposer: Joe Nunez-Mino

Seconded: Ruth Waters

In person: For [27] Against [0] Abstain [0]

Online: For [10] Against [0] Abstain [0]

Total: For [37] Against [0] Abstain [0]

Agenda item 6 – Auditors' Remuneration

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

Proposer: Shirley Thompson

Seconded: Greg Carson

In person: For [27] Against [0] Abstain [0]

Online: For [10] Against [0] Abstain [0]

Total: For [37] Against [0] Abstain [0]

Agenda item 7 – Election of Trustees

One Trustee, Rupert Lancaster, is leaving at this AGM after serving three consecutive periods of three years. The Board of Trustees would like to record their sincere thanks to Rupert for his contribution to BCT.

New Trustees

The Board of Trustees is pleased to nominate.

- Colette Marshall – for election as a Trustee (**Resolution 6**)

Proposer: Ruth Waters

Seconded: Orly Razgour

In person: For [27] Against [0] Abstain [0]

Online: For [10] Against [0] Abstain [0]

Total: For [37] Against [0] Abstain [0]

Colette Marshall

Colette Marshall is Director of Operations at Diabetes UK responsible for Volunteering, Services and their work in communities across the nations and regions of the UK. She has also played a big part in strategy development especially futures thinking and horizon scanning. Colette joined Diabetes UK in 2013 after roles in MEND, Save the Children, Merlin, Centrepont and the Big Issue. In all her roles there was a focus on poverty and the inequalities this drives. She has experience of large-scale campaigning, of working in coalitions, and of fundraising and partnerships. She has held Trustee roles in the past. Her career started as a research scientist and then later on innovation and leading a business in the corporate sector. She has an Exec MBA from London Business School and is a qualified coach.

Colette has watched bats for years for the sheer pleasure that they bring and is lucky enough to live near a specially created bat roost. She discovered BCT over lockdown and has been inspired by the great training it gives to volunteers and has joined the London Bat Group. Colette hopes to use her charity experience to support BCT in thriving in the changing world so that bats and the ecosystems they live in are protected.

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.

Two Trustees are standing for re-election at this AGM and the Board of Trustees is pleased to make the following proposal, for Stuart Brittenden and Ruth Waters to be re-elected as Trustees for a second term.

- Stuart Brittenden – nominated for re-election as a Trustee (**Resolution 7**)

Proposer: Ruth Waters

Seconded: Kirsty Park

In person: For [27] Against [0] Abstain [0]

Online: For [10] Against [0] Abstain [0]

Total: For [37] Against [0] Abstain [0]

Stuart Brittenden

Stuart is an employment law barrister at Old Square Chambers where he has practised since 1999. He covers the full spectrum of individual and collective employment law. His practice areas include industrial relations, discrimination, and judicial review. He is ranked as a leading barrister in Chambers & Partners, Legal 500, and Who's Who Legal.

He has previously been a director and Management Committee member of the Employment Lawyers Association, and also a member of the Bar Standards Board Qualifications Committee. He has also lectured in employment law at the London School of Economics.

Stuart hopes that his legal expertise and experience will benefit the BCT in dealing with the challenges it faces. He also very much wishes to increase his knowledge of bats and their habitats.

- Ruth Waters – nominated for re-election as a Trustee (**Resolution 8**)

Proposer: Stuart Brittenden

Secunder: Ed Wells

In person: For [27] Against [0] Abstain [0]

Online: For [9] Against [0] Abstain [1]

Total: For [37] Against [0] Abstain [1]

Dr Ruth Waters

Ruth is Director of Evidence for Natural England. She supports Natural England in the development of applied science and evidence to inform evidence-led advice for practical action and management for conservation and the natural environment.

Ruth's early career was as a mammologist, working on Daubenton's bats in Wharfedale and then as the mammal specialist for the Countryside Council for Wales including work on monitoring lesser horseshoe bats. Since that time, she has worked on a wide range of projects within Natural England and has broad multi-disciplinary experience including working with economists, social scientists, artists, health experts, social justice experts, historians and ecologists to seek better ways of understanding, valuing and managing our natural environment for people and nature. Ruth was recently awarded the British Ecological Society Prize for Ecological Engagement.

Officer roles

For your information, the Board of Trustees has agreed the following Officer roles for the coming year. This is in line with the change in procedure agreed at the 2019 AGM.

Jean Matthews – Chair (continuing in the role)
 Steve Roe – Vice Chair (continuing in the role)
 Ani Binet – Secretary (continuing in the role)
 Ruth Waters – Treasurer (continuing in the role)

Agenda item 9 – Any other notified business

The official AGM was formally closed.

Jean Matthews, Chair

Minutes: Andreia Correia da Costa (Senior Engagement and Fundraising Officer)