

BRIGHTON 2005

Minutes of the National Trust Annual General Meeting held at The Dome, Brighton on Saturday 12 November 2005

Chairman: William Proby

Present: Henry Aubrey-Fletcher (retiring Deputy Chairman and Chairman of the Properties Committee until 31 August 2005) Laurie Magnus (new Deputy Chairman and Chairman of the Finance Committee until 31 August 2005), members of the Board of Trustees, members of the Council, the Director-General, members of the Senior Management Team, staff and some 700 members of the National Trust.

1. Welcome and introduction

The **Chairman, William Proby** welcomed members to the Dome in Brighton.

This was the first Annual General Meeting under the new governance arrangements which had come into effect on 1 September 2005 and the Chairman started by introducing the members of the new Board of Trustees: Sue Davies, Crispin Davis, Charles Gurassa, Mark Jones, Laurie Magnus, Hugh Matheson, Adrian Phillips, Michael Quicke, Simon Timms and Mary Villiers.

William Proby went on to explain that under the new governance structure the Council had the vital responsibility of appointing the Board of Trustees and acting as the conscience of the Trust. Many members of the Council were present and he thanked them all for the hugely important role they performed.

The Chairman added a very special thank you to Henry Aubrey-Fletcher who was standing down as Deputy Chairman and made a presentation to him. The meeting noted that at its October meeting the Council had appointed Laurie Magnus, the former Chairman of the Finance Committee, to succeed Henry Aubrey-Fletcher as Deputy Chairman.

Fiona Reynolds, Director-General, added her thanks and those of all the staff to Henry Aubrey-Fletcher. She went on to introduce the Senior Management team; Tim Butler, the Trust's Solicitor; and Jane Clarke, the Secretary; and thanked the many staff who had given up their weekend to help make sure everything ran smoothly. The Director-General also welcomed the many members of National Trust Centres and Associations present.

The Chairman introduced Harry Goring, Regional Chairman for the South East and Sue Saville, Regional Director who, at the end of the morning, would be giving a brief introduction to the Region.

In his opening remarks the Chairman emphasised that the past year had been both very demanding and vitally important. As a result of progress made the Trust was now in better shape than ever and in a position to focus on delivering its core purpose – looking after special places for ever, for everyone. The Organisational Review and the move to Swindon had been successfully completed, the governance changes had been implemented and good progress had been made in rebasing the Trust's finances.

He also used his speech to celebrate the conservation work the Trust carried out 365 days a year and to highlight the

quality of expert conservation skill and knowledge this required. Lastly the Chairman announced that preparations were being made for a campaign in 2006 by heritage organisations to demonstrate to the Government the extent of public support for history and heritage.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held in Newcastle upon Tyne on 6 November 2004 were approved by the meeting and signed by the Chairman.

3. Annual Report and Accounts 2004/5

Fiona Reynolds introduced her address by summarising how the Trust had performed against its declared targets over the past year. The Trust had exceeded its visitor numbers target, welcoming 13.4 million visits to pay-for-entry properties and more importantly visitor appreciation was high and growing higher. Income from fundraising had also grown with a total of £61 million from legacies, appeals and gifts; and National Trust (Enterprises), the Trust's trading company, was performing very well with a profit of £16.6 million. Although members had been recruited at a slightly slower rate than in the recent past, 460,000 new members had been recruited and the total membership grew to 3.34m. The Trust had an amazing 43,000 volunteers, all of whom she thanked warmly.

The Director-General went on to explain the background to the problems with the implementation of the new membership computer system and apologised to those who had been affected. She emphasised that the worst problems were over but there was still a lot to be done to get to a satisfactory level of service for everyone.

Fiona Reynolds then gave an overview of the past year and described some of the Trust's achievements and challenges, drawing on examples of re-openings, new properties and the Trust's conservation and access work. She mentioned in particular the Trust's work on the coastline during the 40th anniversary of the Neptune Coastline Campaign and the challenge of climate change; the Trust's nature conservation work and the challenges facing upland farmers. These pressures had triggered the Trust's decision to amalgamate High Yewdale Farm in Coniston with its neighbours, a decision that was currently under review by the Board of Trustees.

She concluded by thanking the staff: marvelling at the sheer diversity and breadth of the Trust's properties and responsibilities, and the skills and brilliance of the staff and expert advisers who helped the Trust protect, manage and

interpret the past in ways that are accessible and meaningful to people of today and tomorrow.

The Chairman formally moved the adoption of the Annual Report and Financial Statements for 2004/05.

Laurie Magnus, Deputy Chairman and former Chairman of the Finance Committee formally seconded the adoption of the Annual Report and Financial Statements. He reminded members that the Trust's Financial Plan had, at its foundation, the simple requirement that the Trust had to pay its way by ensuring that there was a minimum margin of at least 20% between operating income and operating expenditure by 2006/07. This went hand in hand with lifting the operating contribution from £3.9m in 2003/04 to £20m by 2006/07.

Laurie Magnus reported that considerable progress had been made towards these targets and he applauded the improvements that had been achieved in both revenue and cost control. He emphasised that it had been very tough, requiring significant changes in ways of working and some very difficult cost cutting – including, sadly, some staff redundancies – and he congratulated the Director-General and the Senior Management Team on meeting this huge operational challenge.

He explained that this was the last time that members would receive a report from the Finance Committee, with the Board of Trustees

now having accountability for the management of the Trust's finances under the new governance arrangements.

The Chairman invited questions from the floor.

Gregory Slay responded on behalf of the Council to a question from **Mr Robert Clark of London** about the process and timetable for the review of appointing bodies – the outcomes of which would be discussed at the 2006 AGM. He explained that 26 members of the Council were appointed by organisations that work in fields related to the Trust to provide a breadth of perspective on the Council to help it fulfil its role of holding the Board of Trustees to account.

He introduced the sub-group of Council members which was leading the review on behalf of the Council. It was aiming to put together a list of organisations which would provide specialist expertise which was relevant to, or would complement, the Trust's work. The organisations had to be pre-eminent and influential in their respective fields at a national level and be able to appoint a member of the Council. Mr Slay invited members who would like to put

forward organisations for the Group to consider to write to him c/o The Secretary at central office.

In reply to a question from **Mr Brian Day, Anne Dixon, Director of Customer Services** emphasised that the Trust welcomed volunteers of all ages and that a very large number of volunteers were over 65. She thanked everyone who volunteered for the Trust and emphasised that without volunteers the Trust would not be able to open its doors. In fact properties needed 20% more volunteers than they currently had and Ms Dixon called for anyone interested in becoming a volunteer to go to the stand in the foyer and pick up an information pack, including a copy of the recent volunteer survey which highlighted the huge array of roles that volunteers carried out in the Trust. There was, she said, a role for everyone whatever their age or experience.

Mr Anthony Pick from Newbury asked about plans to reduce the £172 million backlog of conservation work.

Peter Nixon, Director of Conservation, confirmed that the Trust was reducing and would continue to reduce the backlog. At the same time it was committing more funds to important long-term cyclical work to stop backlog arising and to countryside work which was not included in the backlog figure

Anne Dixon, Director of Customer Services apologised to **Christine McCann**, a visitor reception volunteer from **Bath**, who complained about poor service from the new membership system. Ms Dixon acknowledged how hard this year had been for front-line staff as a result of these problems. She emphasised that the old system had been failing and had to be replaced, and that the new one would bring significant long term benefits. However, she made it clear that the Trust was at the beginning of a seven year project and there was still a great deal to do before those benefits would be realised. Anne Dixon encouraged any members who still had problems to use the helpdesk service available at the meeting.

Sylvia Adams spoke of her disappointment at the appearance of the exterior of the new central office in Swindon. In response the **Director-General** made the point that aesthetics were very much in the eye of the beholder and that while some people did not like the building many others did. She urged members who had not done so to visit Swindon and see both Heelis and the extraordinary nineteenth century buildings in the Brunel Railway Yards. The Director-General went on to explain that the architects of the Trust's new building had drawn on the resonances of the time and had used industrial brick to create the exterior and the traditional form of pitched roofs to allow large amounts of natural light

into the building which contributed to making it such a fantastic place to work. The Chairman emphasised that the Trust had not paid for the construction of the building, but paid a rent for it.

In response to a question from **Mr David Nichols of Gosport, Simon Murray, Director of Operations** reported that during 2006 he would be reviewing opening hours to help ensure that as far as possible properties would open when members wanted to visit rather than what was convenient for the Trust. He emphasised that the Trust was already extending opening hours but there would always be restrictions because of the conservation needs of the properties and the limitations of staffing. There were also times of the year when there was not enough interest from visitors to justify opening. Mr Murray undertook to write to Mr Nicols in response to his specific point about St Mary's Church at Studley Royal.

At the request of **Mr Peter Bate of Exmoor, Peter Nixon, Director of Conservation** updated the meeting on how the Trust was addressing the questions Mr Bate had raised at the 2004 AGM about the standard of let housing stock. He confirmed that £5m was being spent on repairs to houses and cottages this year and there would be a significant increase to over £8m in 2006/07 which would fund more than 70% of all the short-term cyclical work identified as needed by Regions.

Mr Bate also asked why National Trust tenants had not yet been given free membership as the Tenants of the National Trust had recommended to the Governance Review. **Anne Dixon** confirmed that a group was considering how tenants' needs for better communication and information could best be met and administered, but emphasised that this may not be through free membership, which would have wide ranging implications including cost and for the Trust's relationship with other groups.

Mr Ian Kennaway from London and a former senior member of staff asked for confirmation that the Neptune Coastline Campaign was still thriving and that the Trust was continuing to acquire important areas of coastline. In response **Peter Nixon, Director of Conservation** confirmed that more funds than ever were being raised by Neptune and that it remained Trust policy to positively seek to acquire the most important areas of coastline. He made the point, however, that there was less top priority coastline to acquire now than in the past, because the Trust has been so successful; and that Neptune funds were just as vital to help with maintenance and other costs.

The **Chairman** reported that there had been several e-mails regarding High Yewdale Farm and read one out from **Emma Newton** as none of the members who had emailed were present. She urged the Trust to retain the farm in its present form. **Mr Rodney Legg**, a member of Council, put the contrary view to the meeting. The Chairman reported that the Board of Trustees would be considering this matter the following week and would be made aware of all the **e-mails** received on this highly controversial issue. If members wanted to help upland farmers, **Henry Aubrey-Fletcher** urged them to do three things: visit the countryside; buy local foods and write to their MP urging the Government to retain the Hill Farm Allowance. In conclusion the Chairman invited any members with questions on High Yewdale Farm to visit the stand in the Corn Exchange where Tiffany Hunt, Regional Director, and John Darlington, Area Manager, would be available.

The Chairman thanked all the speakers for their questions and invited members, under the new arrangements, to vote by a show of hands on the resolution to approve the adoption of the Annual Report and accounts for 2004/05. There was an overwhelming show of hands in support and no request for a poll. The resolution was passed by a show of hands.

4. Appointment of Auditors

The resolution to appoint PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP of 31 Great George Street, Bristol, BS1 5QD as auditors for the ensuing year was proposed by the Chairman and seconded by Laurie Magnus.

The resolution was passed by a show of hands.

5. Elections to the Council

The Solicitor, Tim Butler, announced the results of the postal ballot for the election of members of the Council in the order that the candidates appeared on the voting paper as follows:

John Farley	31,862	Elected
Ann Maw	23,468	
William Proby	30,993	Elected
Russell Walters	25,379	Elected
Anthony Eastwood	12,410	
Diana Gibbins	17,863	
Nicholas Soames	16,802	
Roger Jones	8,813	
Richard Cuthbertson	26,992	Elected
Janet Wootton	16,519	

Jane Kingsley	19,802	
Richard Haslam	27,213	Elected
Simon Timms	29,558	Elected
Sophie Scruton	24,490	Elected
Bob Roberts	18,342	

The Chairman congratulated all those who had been elected to the Council and thanked all 15 who had stood.

6. Members' resolution: travel to properties

The meeting agreed to take the resolution without a formal seconder who had been unable to attend because of a family crisis.

Jenny Sheriff proposed the resolution by stressing that it was not an anti-car resolution. She reminded the meeting that this was following up an AGM resolution from 10 years ago, and explained that the aim of the resolution was to emphasise that climate change is an issue we all share responsibility for tackling and to ask what the Trust and its members were going to do to lead the way and set an example that others could follow.

Robert Jones responded on behalf of the Council. He opened the discussion by highlighting that there had been an unprecedented mailbag on this important and very difficult subject. He thanked everyone who had contributed to the debate and drew attention to the summary in the delegate pack of all the views that had been received. Mr Jones set out briefly the dilemma for the Trust and talked about the 80 green transport initiatives the Trust already supported. He asked members to consider whether they felt the Trust should be doing more.

In the course of discussion **Fleur Speakman, member of Council appointed by Transport 2000**, urged Trust staff including Property Managers to think more about how to make properties more accessible to walkers and cyclists and those using public transport. **Mr Jim Kerr from Leeds** suggested that more needed to be done to inform members and non-members how they could visit properties without using their car. **The Rev David Braid** raised the cost and inconvenience of public transport. Mr Robert Clark from London did not own a car and highlighted the many properties in the South East that were easily accessible by public transport. **Mr Steve Buckel** felt that the statement that car travel was a major source of pollution had not been substantiated. He did not feel that a National Trust AGM was the right place to discuss such an issue. **Mr Peter Bate from Exmoor** suggested that the Trust might look at what it could do to help farmers raise funding for trials to grow crops as alternative fuels to petrol.

Mark Harold, Director for Devon and Cornwall

summed up on behalf of the Trust by concluding that there was support for the principles behind the resolution but that in reality the alternatives to the car were often very limited. The Trust should provide alternatives where practical and cost-effective; this was particularly beneficial if it could be done in partnership with others.

Jenny Sheriff thanked everyone for the positive way they had received the resolution and highlighted recycling and seatbelts as two examples of how, when the will was there, things could change in a relatively short timeframe.

In the light of the considerable interest this resolution had generated, having taken a show of hands the **Chairman** called a poll and The Solicitor, Tim Butler, explained the procedure for voting. The members were asked to complete the blue ballot paper marked "3" and put it, at the end of the morning session, into one of the ballot boxes positioned around the hall. The Solicitor would announce the results at the end of the afternoon session and they would be posted on the National Trust website.

7. Conclusion

The Chairman, on behalf of the meeting, thanked the Secretary, Jane Clarke, for having organised this and previous AGMs.

Harry Goring, Chairman of the South East Regional Committee and **Sue Saville, Regional Director** gave members a quick tour of the region with slides and examples. In their presentation they focused on the many people who helped the Trust in a number of different ways, and the particular challenges in the South East including planning, transport and managing a fast-changing coastline.

The Chairman thanked all who had taken part in the AGM and looked forward to seeing everyone in Cheltenham on Saturday 4 November 2006 for the 111th Annual General Meeting.

8. Results of the Ballot

		<i>For</i>	<i>Against</i>	<i>Abstain</i>
Resolution 3	Specified	10,693	39,163	3,587
Car travel to properties	Discretionary	3	1	4,722
Total		10,696	39,164	8,309

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