

CHELTENHAM 2006

Minutes of the National Trust
Annual General Meeting held at
The Centaur, Cheltenham
Racecourse, Cheltenham
on Saturday 4 November 2006

Chairman: William Proby

Present: Laurie Magnus (Deputy Chairman), members of the Board of Trustees, members of the Council, the Director-General, members of the Senior Management Team, staff and some 650 members of the National Trust.

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1. Welcome and introduction

The **Chairman, William Proby**, welcomed members to Cheltenham Racecourse.

Fiona Reynolds, Director-General, extended the welcome to include those watching the AGM via the internet and encouraged members to ask questions, make comments and take part in debates. The Chairman and Director-General would be available in surgeries during the afternoon to discuss all aspects of the Trust's work.

The Director-General also introduced Richard Wilkin, Regional Chairman for Wessex, and Brendan McCarthy, Regional Director, who, at the end of the morning, would be giving a brief introduction to the Region.

In his opening remarks the **Chairman** noted that one of the subjects being debated was likely to provoke strong views from each side. While he acknowledged that members were entitled to raise strongly held concerns, the Chairman stressed the need to consider the interests of the National Trust and its core purpose rather than becoming involved in wider issues which had little to do with the Trust's core work.

The Chairman highlighted the shared passion of the National Trust's membership and staff to fight for places that inspired them. The Trust faced many challenges such as the effects of climate change, the escalating costs of repairing buildings and the increasing requirement for conservation of coastline and peat moors. Key to meeting these challenges was the support of members, donors, volunteers and visitors. The Trustees and Council were determined to continue to inspire all supporters, to listen and respond to their needs and to put them at the heart of what the Trust does.

The Chairman was proud of the Trust's achievements over the past three years but acknowledged there were many challenges to face. However, if the Trust could continue to build support, he was confident the Trust could meet these challenges.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held in Brighton on 12 November 2005 were approved by the meeting and signed by the Chairman.

3. Annual Report and Financial Statements 2005/06

Fiona Reynolds stated that 2005/06 had been a good year and in many ways the best since she had joined as Director-General. She thanked staff, volunteers, members and supporters for contributing to this achievement. She then went on to highlight some examples of the Trust's work such

as the renovation of a ceiling fresco at Kingston Lacy, the re-thatching of Alfriston Clergy House (the first building acquired by the Trust) and the success of the Seabird Recovery Project on Lundy. The Annual Report and Review contained many more examples of the Trust's work, which combined success in meeting financial targets, the recruitment of nearly half a million new members and the highest ever spend on conservation. These were all signs of good health. During the last year some 47,000 volunteers had contributed 2.6 million hours of time in support of the Trust's work.

The Director-General went on to describe the open-arms approach to conservation which sought engagement with visitors and supporters, tailored to meet their individual needs. This concept drove the Tyntesfield Project which, with the support of the Heritage Lottery Fund (£20 million), was pioneering 'participative conservation'. An estimated 160,000 people a year – including disadvantaged and troubled young people – were expected to visit and learn about a working estate and heritage craft skills. At a national level the Trust had been heavily involved in the *History Matters – Pass it On* campaign which had generated significant involvement. The Trust was also continuing campaigns to influence the Department of Transport over proposals relating to Stonehenge and BAA's plans at Hatfield Forest (Stansted expansion).

Fiona Reynolds concluded that the goal and vision of the Trust's founders remained today as fresh and relevant, practical and romantic as ever: 'to provide a thousand sources of everlasting delight for the people of this nation'.

The Chairman formally moved the adoption of the Annual Report and Financial Statements for 2005/06.

Laurie Magnus, Deputy Chairman, formally seconded the adoption of the Annual Report and Financial Statements. To place the Financial Statements in context, he emphasised to members the ongoing requirement for the Trust to be able 'to pay its own way'. The Trust was an independent charity with annual costs in excess of £300 million and the 'perpetual liability' to maintain its properties, landscapes, gardens, houses and contents. This liability included a known repair backlog of £167 million. While the Trust welcomed magnificent contributions such as the Heritage Lottery Fund's £20 million for Tyntesfield and a continuing stream of legacies and windfalls, it remained essential for the Trust to generate income.

As a result of a poor financial situation three years ago, when the General Fund operating contribution was less than £4 million and the General Reserve could only cover 21 days' running costs, the Trust set two critical financial targets.

These were to achieve, by 2007, a net gain of at least 20 per cent and a General Fund operating contribution of £20 million.

Laurie Magnus reported that the 20 per cent net gain was achieved in 2006 and the Trust was on track to achieve the £20 million General Fund operating contribution during the current financial year. These achievements were the result of considerable efforts from staff and volunteers, through difficult times. He was immensely proud and offered his congratulations and thanks to all concerned.

He summed up by saying that as a result of all this work, the Trust was better placed to deliver on its core purpose, looking after places of historic interest or natural beauty permanently for the benefit of the nation.

The Chairman invited questions from the floor.

Andrew Turner-Cross of Slindon, West Sussex, raised the issue of void lettings of National Trust properties. The National Trust's re-let performance, as measured by the Tenants' Association, was significantly worse than housing associations with an average re-let time of six months compared to four weeks. Thus not only were potential tenants being deprived of housing opportunities but the National Trust was also losing significant income from lost rent. **Peter Nixon, Director of Conservation**, agreed that the Trust needed to reduce void lettings and had allocated £1.27 million funding to assist the process of speeding up re-letting. He stressed that matching housing association re-let times was unlikely to be achievable, since the conservation demands of Trust properties complicated the issue in terms of timing and funding. As part of its ongoing work, the Trust had committed £15 million this year for project and maintenance work on Trust houses and cottages.

Continuing the theme of tenant properties, **Peter Bate of Minehead**, sought policy and funding clarification for bringing National Trust houses and cottages up to the Government's Decent Homes Standard. He noted that at last year's AGM an additional £8 million were allocated to this objective and good progress was being made. However, an estimated £50–80 million were still required. In response, **Peter Nixon, Director of Conservation**, noted that although the Decent Homes Standard was not mandatory for the National Trust to follow, the Trust recognised and supported the principle that tenants should live in homes of a decent standard. The increased level of funding to address this issue had previously been highlighted. Furthermore, the Trust was pleased to note that a member of the Tenants' Association was now on the Trust's Land Use & Access Panel, which was constructive to the progress of the issue.

Robert Clark from London, drawing on earlier discussions on the difficult challenges to meet financial targets, asked what the impact on staff turnover had been associated with setting up the new central office in Swindon. **Paul Boniface, Director of Human Resources**, explained the active measures taken to minimise turnover but recognised that, regrettably, some staff had been lost. In 2000, combined central office staff leavers totalled 89 personnel which was higher than usual but lower than expected. A huge effort had gone into retaining staff but not all were able to relocate or travel increased distances.

Duncan Douglas sought clarification of the Trust's position on advice and support to affiliated organisations (eg Centres and Associations) on adopting charitable status. **Anne Dixon, Director of Customer Services**, welcomed this issue being raised as Centres and Associations played an important part of the Trust's work and culture. She reported that the relationship between the Trust and associated groups was under review. The review included the question of separate registration as charities. She expected to have an answer before the next AGM.

Fiona Reynolds, Director-General, gave an overview of the key risk areas in response to a query from **James Mackay of Warwick**. The main current risks were finance related, such as Natural England and DEFRA funding cuts which affected farmers/tenants, and other issues affecting legacy and membership income. She agreed that it would be helpful to provide more information on major risks in future Annual Reports.

At the request of **Anthony Pick, Andrew Copestake, Director of Finance**, outlined the current target and actual General Fund operating cost cover. The Trust set itself a target for the General Reserve to cover three months' running costs. At February 2006 the General Fund was at £23 million, equivalent to 2.1 months, or 63 days.

Anton Buckoke expressed his concern at the lack of Government leadership and inconsistent policies regarding CO₂ emissions and urged the Trust, as a leading and respected environmental body, to fill this void. **Peter Nixon, Director of Conservation**, on behalf of the Trust, said that climate change was probably the Trust's single greatest challenge. Therefore, reducing the Trust's environmental footprint was a key element in the Trust's new strategy and two directors had been charged with championing the issue. Action had already commenced by setting targets for energy reduction within the Trust's properties and developing green energy projects. The Trust agreed that it should demonstrate and champion the climate change issue, and the Trust intended to launch a major climate change exhibition in March 2007 to highlight the positive work it was doing.

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John Harvey of Monmouth queried the inefficiency of the National Trust in Wales' policy to duplicate all correspondence, signs, etc. in both English and Welsh, given that other Welsh institutes such as the Welsh Library and Welsh Heritage, were able to tailor communication to the language of choice. In reply, **Simon Murray, Director of Operations**, highlighted the intrinsic links between the Welsh language and Welsh heritage. The Trust aimed to satisfy the needs of both English and Welsh speakers which is why the Trust used both languages in the majority of its publications.

The Chairman thanked all the speakers for their questions and invited members to vote by a show of hands on the resolution to approve the adoption of the Annual Report and Financial Statements for 2005/06. 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. National Trust Bill for Northern Ireland

Patrick Casement, Chairman of the Northern Ireland Committee, Trustee and Council member, proposed the resolution which sought to gain consent for the promotion of 'A Bill to make provisions as to the National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty in relation to Northern Ireland'. He explained that the Charity Commission's Parliamentary Scheme, which passed Trust responsibilities from the Council to the Board of Trustees, did not apply in Northern Ireland. The Bill would achieve this and also remove a clause which prevented National Trust tenants in Northern Ireland from being members of the Council or other bodies. The Trust had consulted widely and had not received any negative comments. The proposal has the unconditional support of the National Trust Trustees, Council and the Committee for Northern Ireland. In order for the Bill to be considered by Parliament, it needed the support of at least three-quarters of votes polled.

The resolution was formally seconded by **Laurie Magnus, Deputy Chairman**.

Peter Bate urged members to support the resolution as it met a core objective of the Tenants' Association by removing the clause which prevented tenants becoming Council members or members of other Trust bodies.

The Solicitor, Tim Butler, explained that Parliamentary rules required a ballot on this resolution. Members were asked to complete the blue ballot paper headed 'Ballot paper for the resolution on the proposal to promote the National Trust (Northern Ireland) Bill' 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.

5. 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, Deputy Chairman**.

The resolution was passed by a show of hands.

6. Members' Resolution: on exempt hunting of deer on National Trust land

The resolution was proposed by **Douglas Batchelor**, who opened his address by stating that the League Against Cruel Sports supported it. The aim of the resolution was to prevent cruelty to deer on National Trust land. He suggested that the use of staghounds to track sick and injured deer was contrary to the deer's best welfare and exposed the deer to unnecessary cruelty. Allowing a hunt to enter National Trust land to help with deer welfare when a Trust stalker was unavailable was inappropriate. The use of professional stalkers would be a more humane approach to the problem.

Cerys Roberts seconded the resolution and questioned whether the National Trust should be an organisation which allowed cruelty to deer. She stated that Trust staff in other areas of the country would not use staghounds to chase deer as part of stalking, and to do so would be a 'backdoor to cruelty'.

Hugh Matheson, Trustee and Council member, responded on behalf of the Trustees. He stated that the Trustees' key priority was the welfare of the deer. The Trust had consulted widely with interested groups and had decided not to allow exempt hunting as carried out elsewhere. However, elements of exempt hunting were considered to be of value to the welfare of deer. These elements included allowing hunt members to assist in dispatching a sick or injured deer to prevent suffering – it would be illogical to refuse the hunt's help on some point of principle at the cost of extending the animal's suffering. They also included the use of professional stalkers to use dogs in support of deer management. In the latter case the Trustees accepted that the use of dogs to assist a stalker was considered best practice where a deer is shot but not killed outright. He therefore recommended that the members vote against the resolution.

The discussion opened with **Robert Clark from London** querying why, as the subject was a local issue, it had not been dealt with at a local level, and also sought information

regarding the Council's working party set up to address the subject. **Douglas Batchelor** answered the first part of the query by saying that intervention at local level was undertaken and the local view was for the Council not to get involved. In answering the second part of the query, **Peter Nixon, Director of Conservation**, explained that a working group had been set up in February 2005 as a consequence of the Hunting Act being introduced. The group sought to monitor deer management for a complete season so that informed and balanced decisions could be made. The working group, chaired by the former Regional Chairman of the Wessex Region, sought a wide range of opinions, including inputs from the League Against Cruel Sports and the Devon and Somerset Staghounds. **June Purvey** expressed concern that the working group had included people with a vested interest in stag hunting. **Peter Nixon, Director of Conservation**, responded by stating that members of the working group were either Council members, Regional Committee members or staff, and irrespective of their personal affiliations it would have been inappropriate to express them at working group meetings.

John Young from Gloucestershire contributed by questioning the motives of the main parties involved in the debate, suggesting that rather than having the National Trust's interest at heart, they were promoting their own sectional interests. An insight into the stalking of deer was provided by **Edmund Marriage of Dorset**, who advised members on the nature of scent hounds and on the use of dogs by stalkers, and on the importance for deer welfare of using both as appropriate. He also added that claims to the contrary could not be substantiated and were misleading. This view was supported by **Lewis Thomas**, a retired veterinary research pathologist, who added that without scent dogs it was almost impossible to find sick and injured deer. The final contributor, **Jim Barrington from London**, introduced himself as one of four former executives of the League Against Cruel Sports who now acknowledged that the use of scent hounds was vital in wildlife management, especially when sick or injured deer needed to be found quickly.

Peter Nixon, Director of Conservation, summing up on behalf of the Trustees, noted that the debate on both sides was focused on the welfare of deer. However, he reiterated that in the Trust's view this was best provided by utilising some very specific elements of exempt hunting necessary to minimise animal suffering.

In his summary, **Douglas Batchelor**, stressed the potential legal implications of allowing hunt members on to Trust land, particularly for staff receiving the initial request for a hunt to pursue a sick or injured animal. He understood the need for

Trust's stalkers to use dogs but considered the exempt hunting policy to be an excuse to permit hunts to pursue deer. It was this last point to which he and his fellow supporters objected.

Although a show of hands indicated a majority vote, the controversial nature of the debate led the **Chairman** to call for a ballot. Members were invited to complete the yellow ballot paper headed 'Ballot paper for the Members' resolution on exempt hunting of deer' and place them in the ballot boxes at the end of the morning session.

7. Members' Resolution: voting arrangements for future reviews of the Council's Appointing Bodies

John Farley from Shropshire proposed a resolution which sought to remove the 'single box' voting option which allowed members to vote for the Council's recommended list of Appointing Bodies rather than voting separately for each organisation. He was taking the unusual step for a Council member to propose a Members' Resolution as he felt strongly that individual members should use their own judgement in selecting Appointing Bodies. He said that he believed that a single box induced members to vote in just one given way and not to exercise their judgement. He argued that since the Blakenham Report had specifically recommended that this approach was not used for electing Council members, the same argument was valid for the election of Appointing Bodies.

Martin Bull from Staines seconded the resolution. Also a Council member, he took the view that the Council did not do enough to understand what the membership wished the Council to do on their behalf. He believed that the Council already exercised considerable influence in short-listing the 34 Appointing Body candidates and then recommending 26 of them. Any combination of the 34 candidate bodies would be adequate to support the Trust's work, particularly as the Trustees and Council had various levels of specialist advice available to them and paid very little attention to who the Appointing Body sends to the Council. Support for this resolution would send a message to the Trust's leadership that the members wished greater consultation on the issues that affected them.

In reply, **Simon Timms, Trustee and Council member**, stated that the Board of Trustees was against the resolution and explained why. The ballot form allowed members either to vote on a case-by-case basis for each Appointing Body, or, alternatively, tick one box to vote for the recommended 26 Appointing Bodies. Members could decide which option they wished to use. In recommending the 26 Appointing Bodies, the Council had identified what it believed was the

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best combination of Appointing Bodies to represent the varied interests of the National Trust. A single voting box made voting easier for those members who wished to endorse the Council's recommendation. The Council considered that this approach, offering both options, worked well and did not need to be changed.

Stephen Davis from Rodborough opened the discussion by indicating that more complicated voting forms had the effect of deterring voting, and he felt that the single box vote which endorsed the Council's view was democratic. However, **Bob Watson from Tamworth** believed that members were capable of choosing who should be selected and questioned the need to provide a short-list of candidates. **Mr Mackay** felt that placing the single vote box at the top of the page rather than the bottom did not encourage participation but made involvement more shallow. He also believed that members should be encouraged to express their own view rather than be told what to think.

Simon Timms summed up on behalf of the Trustees and Council. He reiterated that the voting form allowed members to express their choice in a number of ways. Furthermore, the Board of Trustees intended to commission some research to look at how the Board and Council operated on this and other issues. In the meantime this resolution would allow members to express their views on this particular issue.

In conclusion, **John Farley** said that the resolution's result would not affect the outcome of voting later in the meeting but would send a message for 2012 when the next review was due. He gave notice that, based on his experience of the difficulty of garnering 50 signatures to bring this resolution to the AGM, he would be bringing a further resolution in 2007 to reduce to ten the number of signatures required, if the Council did not itself do so. The resolution was aimed at providing good governance, which was vital for the continued good health of the Trust. Members were encouraged to use their vote and to support the resolution.

The Chairman requested a show of hands and, due to a mixed result, called for a ballot. Members were asked to complete the orange ballot paper headed 'Ballot paper for the Members' resolution on future reviews of the Council's Appointing Bodies', and hand it in at the end of the meeting.

8. Elections to 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:

Sophie Andreae	14,016	Elected
Christopher Boyle	14,929	Elected
Christine Buckley	5,738	
Martin Bull	17,936	Elected
John Burton	15,437	Elected
Jennifer Clayton	5,714	
Charles Collins	16,265	Elected
Rosemary Coyne	6,524	
Hugo de Ferranti	14,107	Elected
Peter-Robert Denton	3,251	
Martin Hallam	5,068	
Valerie Humphrey	17,728	Elected
Robert Jones	12,973	
Edward Lord	7,597	
Laurie Magnus	16,509	Elected
Hugh Matheson	13,890	Elected
Anne Maw	8,838	
Robin Page	19,188	Elected
Robert Ruffles	3,123	
Nicholas Soames	14,649	Elected
Graham Spooner	4,093	
Carline Tisdall	9,805	
John Townsend	12,960	
John (Mark) Wandless	5,555	
Janet Wootton	5,496	
Mary Yule	13,067	

The **Chairman** congratulated those who had been elected to the Council and thanked all 26 who had stood.

9. Election of Appointing Bodies to Council

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

Appointing Body	Votes	
Age Concern England	6,095	
Black Environment Network	2,454	
British Ecological Society	28,357	Elected
British Trust for Conservation Volunteers	29,503	Elected
Campaign to Protect Rural England	29,447	Elected
Confederation of British Industry	24,514	Elected
Council for British Archaeology	28,986	Elected
Country Land and Business Association	25,358	Elected

Countryside Council for Wales	27,251	Elected
English Heritage	9,297	
The Garden History Society	29,101	Elected
Historic Houses Association	8,626	
Icon, Institute of Conservation	25,176	Elected
Joint Committee of the National Amenity Societies	25,135	Elected
The Linnean Society of London	4,217	
Museums Association	28,445	Elected
National Association of Decorative & Fine Arts Societies	27,923	Elected
National Federation of Women's Institutes	26,019	Elected
Open Spaces Society	28,272	Elected
The Prince's Trust	27,206	Elected
Qualifications and Curriculum Authority	1,221	
The Ramblers' Association	28,026	Elected
Royal Agricultural Society of England	27,981	Elected
The Royal Horticultural Society	29,828	Elected
Royal Institute of British Architects	6,122	
The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland	23,172	Elected
Society of Antiquaries of London	25,871	Elected
Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings	29,609	Elected
Soil Association	27,568	Elected
Sustrans	24,953	Elected
Transport 2000	2,901	
Visit Britain	24,607	Elected
The Wildlife Trusts	26,408	Elected
Youth Hostels Association	24,741	Elected

The **Chairman** welcomed the elected organisations and looked forward to working with them in the future.

10. Introduction to the Wessex Region

Richard Wilkin, Regional Chairman of the Wessex Region, welcomed members to Wessex and expressed his pride in hosting this AGM. He then thanked Wessex Regional staff and volunteers, as well as central office staff for all their hard work to make the event a success, before introducing Brendan McCarthy, Wessex Regional Director.

Brendan McCarthy, Regional Director, gave an overview of the Wessex Region, highlighting some of the displays on show at the AGM and some of the major projects going on within the Region. Both Richard Wilkin and Brendan McCarthy would be available to discuss issues affecting the Region during the rest of the day.

11. Octavia Hill Medal

The Octavia Hill Medal was presented to John Workman for outstanding service and contribution to the Trust, with a citation delivered by **Julian Prideaux, ex-Deputy Director-General and Secretary**.

12. Conclusion

The **Chairman** concluded the meeting by thanking attendees and reminded members to vote as they left the hall, with the results to be announced at 3.45pm. He also expressed his thanks to the two sign language interpreters and stenographer.

Results of the Ballots

Resolution 2

Resolution to consent to the promotion of the National Trust Bill for Northern Ireland

	<i>For</i>	<i>Against</i>	<i>Abstain</i>
Specified	28,865	307	1,100
Discretionary	4,165	0	0
Total votes	33,030	307	1,100

Resolution 4

Members' resolution on exempt hunting of deer

	<i>For</i>	<i>Against</i>	<i>Abstain</i>
Specified	12,763	17,038	1,539
Discretionary	5	3,144	0
Total votes	12,768	20,182	1,539

Resolution 5

Members' resolution of voting arrangements for future reviews of appointing bodies

	<i>For</i>	<i>Against</i>	<i>Abstain</i>
Specified	15,344	12,269	2,143
Discretionary	10	4701	0
Total votes	15,354	16,970	2,143

