



National  
Trust

# AGM Minutes

# 2017

Minutes of the National Trust's  
123rd Annual General Meeting,  
held at STEAM Museum, Swindon  
on Saturday 21 October 2017

---

Chair: Tim Parker

Present: Dame Helen Ghosh DCB, Director-General  
Members of the Board of Trustees  
Staff and some 500 members of the National Trust

## 1. Welcome

**Tim Parker, the Chair**, welcomed members to the National Trust's 123rd Annual General Meeting. He introduced new Trustee Nick Stace, and thanked Trustee Gus Casely-Hayford who was standing down from the Board at the end of the year. He also thanked Peter Nixon, Director of Land, Landscape & Nature who had retired after 32 years and welcomed to the meeting his successor, Mark Harold, as well as the new Director of Curation & Experience, John Orna-Ornstein.

The Chair acknowledged this was the last AGM for Dame Helen Ghosh, the Director-General, and noted the milestones achieved during the last five years – of membership reaching 5 million and visitors this year numbering 24.5 million. The Trust had invested more funds in its estate and its people by, for example, almost doubling the number of curators, and providing better on-line experiences for members.

Another important contribution had been the setting of a clear and viable long-term strategy, *Playing our part*, which put looking after the Trust's places first. The strategy also gave a new impetus to improving the health and beauty of the natural environment, demanding new, more imaginative ways of interpreting properties and helping people connect with and protect the heritage and green space close to where they live.

The Chair thanked the Director-General and wished her well in her new role.

Acknowledging some criticism of the charity in the press, the Chair emphasised that the Trust remained committed to supporting hill farming in the Lake District, would continue to welcome people at Easter and, while wanting to be an inclusive organisation that appealed to everyone, would not campaign for anything other than conservation. Record funds were being invested in conservation and interpretation, and a new and ambitious research strategy had just been published.

The Chair explained that progress against the strategy was documented in the 2016/17 Annual Report and Accounts, noting that it has been a year of excellent progress with stretching targets for membership growth, visitor numbers and budgets all having been exceeded. As a result, £139 million had been invested in conservation during the last year, while the challenge of managing the number of visitors at peak times was

being addressed by a substantial programme to improve visitor infrastructure.

Talking to volunteers during visits to properties and hearing of their successes and challenges was always inspiring. Memorable visits this year included seeing the improvement of habitat in the Peak District such as at White Peak, climbing the 175-foot-high Wellington Monument and seeing the improvements at the Shugborough Estate which had recently returned to the Trust's direct management.

The National Trust Council has also had a good year. It had further cemented its role as the guardian of the Trust's core purpose and also served as a critical friend to the Board of Trustees. The Board itself had worked well with the Executive Team to ensure that the Board fully probed areas of weakness. Over the last year, the Board had covered topics such as managing visitor growth, volunteering and aspects of the Trust's strategy such as outdoors and nature programmes.

In an increasingly complex and fast-moving world the Trust provided the beauty, authenticity and a sense of permanence and continuity that many people welcomed. The charity was changing in response to new threats and opportunities and to reflect the concerns and priorities of different generations. This was achieved in part by looking after the wonderful places in its care. The Trust has always had a mandate to speak out in defence of the things it was established to protect. While remaining apolitical, it was right that the Trust shared its views about major issues such as farming and environmental protections in a post-Brexit world. Working with tenants, local communities and other partners, the Trust should assist decision-makers in thinking through new models for the future that supported the nation's natural and built heritage.

In commending the 2016/17 Annual Report and Financial Statements, the Chair thanked members for their support of the Trust as well as donors, tenants, centres, associations, partners, historic families and, of course, staff and volunteers.

## 2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held in Swindon on 22 October 2016 were approved by the meeting and signed by the Chair.

### 3. Director-General's review of the year

**Helen Ghosh, Director-General**, reviewed some of the highlights of the past year before reflecting on her five years in post.

As the Chair had mentioned, it has been another best year ever for the Trust in terms of visitor numbers, and the milestone of 5 million members had been reached. Members of the Trust had access to 775 miles of coastline, 257,000 hectares of land and the 350 historic houses and gardens in the Trust's care. Members were united as part of a cause which conserved those places for everyone to enjoy now and in the future. For this, the Director-General thanked everyone for playing their part, because without it the Trust couldn't fulfil its purpose as a conservation charity and deliver its strategy which was now in its third year.

Conservation remained at the heart of what the Trust does, with a record £139 million invested in conservation projects in the past year. This included work at Knole in Kent where the Trust was undertaking the largest building and restoration project in the Trust's history and where the new state-of-the-art Conservation Studio had been opened. This studio housed a dedicated team of conservation specialists who worked on paintings, furniture and objects from the property in front of visitors to demonstrate the work that went into looking after some of the nation's treasures.

Work continued at Clandon Park in Surrey where visitors had taken the opportunity to see the structure of the building and some of the areas which survived the fire in 2015. In March an international design competition was launched to find a world-class team to help the Trust restore the significant ground-floor rooms and reimagine the upper floors as gallery and exhibition spaces. A short list of six from over 60 entries had been invited to submit concept designs, which had been on public display at Clandon. The Trust's expert jury met in September to choose the winning design team which would be announced shortly.

The Vyne in Hampshire was currently undergoing a £5.4 million project to repair and secure the roof. Visitors were able to take walkway tours around the roof scaffolding to see the conservation work up close and sign one of the 71,000 new roof tiles before they were fixed on the roof. The project had involved scholars from the universities of Oxford, Bangor and Southampton

who undertook further research and re-presented the interiors of the house for visitors to enjoy.

The Director-General explained that the Trust was investing more in curatorial excellence than at any time in the Trust's history to meet its ambition to create experiences to move, teach and inspire its visitors. Doubling the number of curators allowed them more time to deliver high-quality interpretation, research and conservation.

In December the Trust released its first research strategy and continued to work with academic partners as well as its own internal experts to uncover new information about the landscapes and buildings in its care. For example, at Fountains Abbey in Yorkshire the Trust had been working with expert partners (including the University of Bradford) for over two years to research the monastic ruins, the largest in the country. The research project used geophysical techniques and ground-penetrating radar to uncover new details about the life of the monks who lived there and their burial rituals, which we can now share with visitors. The Challenging Histories programme continued in its annual series of events and exhibitions, exploring some of the more hidden aspects of Trust properties. These would focus on stories that reflected national anniversaries and wider debates about history, identity and the world we live in today.

This year the Trust had marked the 50th anniversary of the partial decriminalisation of homosexuality in England and Wales, with a number of its places having been home to, and shaped by, people who challenged conventional ideas of gender and sexuality, working with partners and communities to share these stories. Next year the Trust would be exploring women's history and suffrage through the anniversary of women gaining the vote in 1918.

The Director-General had been delighted to accept the judges' 'Special Recognition' award at the 2017 Museum + Heritage Awards. The judges commended the Trust on the part it had played in making heritage more widely accessible over the last decade.

The Trust's third strategic ambition was to help restore a healthy and beautiful natural environment. Over the next ten years, the Trust was committed to restoring or creating 25,000 hectares (nearly 100 square miles) of wildlife habitats and working on its own land and

with tenants to restore all of its designated wildlife sites to good ecological condition. There were many great examples of organisations and individuals, including Trust tenants, who recognised the importance of farming in harmony with nature, as well as on land managed directly by the Trust. Kinder Scout in the Peak District showed the visible difference to the landscape that conservation work had made in the last seven years. At High Peak Moors the Trust had worked with tenants, local stakeholders and other partners to restore them for future generations as part of a 50-year vision; 80 hectares of bare peat which was being washed away in 2010 was now covered in vegetation.

The Trust has just acquired land on the White Cliffs of Dover coastline following a public fundraising appeal and with support from the People's Postcode Lottery. Over £1 million was raised in three weeks to secure the 700,000 square metres of land in order to preserve existing historical features and access routes for visitors. This stretch of land was also crucial for nature and wildlife with over 40 species of flower and grasses per square metre, providing the perfect habitat for butterflies and birds. However, restoring a healthy beautiful natural environment could not be done alone. In August the Trust once again worked with the BBC at *Countryfile Live* at Blenheim Palace, hosting a programme of discussions and panel debates on a variety of topics from managing the uplands to the impact of Brexit on the countryside. In her speech there, the Director-General had explained that Brexit gave the Trust the opportunity to rethink how farmers and landowners could run thriving, successful farm businesses, producing the food the world needed while also delivering wider environmental benefits and public goods such as healthy soils, clean water and improved wildlife habitats. Telling new audiences about the Trust's natural environment work was also important, and viewers may have noticed that *Springwatch* was broadcast from the Trust's Sherborne Estate in Gloucestershire, which would also be host to *Autumnwatch*.

This year the Trust had continued to test the ways it could play its part in promoting local heritage and green space in the places where people live, a further element of the *Playing our part* strategy. The Trust had been working with Newcastle City Council to help it think about how a sustainable, community-led trust could be set up to manage the city's public parks. In Birmingham the Trust had been working with a coalition

of heritage and local community groups to keep open and ultimately restore the Edwardian Moseley Road Baths, one of the country's few remaining Edwardian pools still in use.

The Director-General reiterated that everything the Trust did relied on support. Membership was the highest source of income, followed by the support of donors and legators who last year gifted approximately £90 million to the Trust. More people than ever had enjoyed access to National Trust properties with 24.5 million visits to pay-for-entry places and more than 200 million to its coast and countryside places. Digital presence was on the increase too, with over 30 million visits to the Trust's new website and 1.9 million social media followers.

Success brought its own challenges of course, and with more people visiting properties more often, it was important to continue to explore ways to increase access while maintaining the highest standards of conservation. Analysis suggested that at most properties there were only a very small number of days (around 4%) that counted as 'super peak' days for visitors, such as Easter and sunny Bank Holidays. About 60% were fairly quiet days. Investment continued in visitor infrastructure such as cafés, toilets and car parks while the Trust continued to think about how better to respond to changes in visitor numbers to balance conservation and a good visitor experience. Increased visitors meant that properties exceeded their planned operating margin – the money ploughed back into conservation work – which achieved 19.9% against a target of 17.9%.

The Director-General commented that since joining the Trust in November 2012 she had visited over 300 properties, with more visits planned over the coming months. She felt that the Trust was an organisation that has responded to the needs of the time while remaining true to its conservation purpose. In its early history the Trust had acquired and protected great landscapes threatened by urban expansion. In the 1930s and 1940s country-house owners caught up in a post-war spiral of declining estate incomes and rising death duties had invited the Trust to step in to save some of these historic buildings for the nation. In the 1960s attention had turned to the development pressures on the coastline which had seen the Trust launch Enterprise Neptune, its most successful fundraising campaign ever.

This ability to adapt was one of the Trust's great strengths. However, people had many different views on what the Trust should and should not do. Plans to help visitors better understand its collections, for example, led to media criticisms of dumbing down, while talking about the real threat posed to properties by climate change had led to accusations of political correctness and straying from the Trust's core purpose. Nothing could be further from the truth; the Trust's conservation work was internationally recognised. Just last year, the Trust had won a prestigious Europa Nostra award for its work on the Gothic tower at Wimpole which was a testament to the skill and expertise of its staff. The Trust remained Europe's largest conservation organisation.

The Director-General was proud of the Trust's continued investment in people, noting the recruitment of staff with a variety of skills from curators to building surveyors, and the availability of training schemes to help the next generation to develop important heritage skills. The experiences offered to visitors at properties had become more engaging and more people were visiting more often as each time there was something new to see or do. 95% of visitors continue to say they had an enjoyable or very enjoyable experience when visiting the Trust's places.

The founders set up the Trust for the benefit of the nation, and it was right therefore that the Trust must make everyone feel welcome when they visited and in the stories that were told to reflect the diversity of the society we lived in. For helping to achieve this, the Director-General thanked everyone for their support.

#### 4. Members' questions

**Charles Steward from Chippenham** asked why the National Trust was becoming involved in politics, adding that the Trust should concentrate on its core remit.

**Tim Parker, Chair**, explained that the Trust was not a political organisation. The Trust did not campaign about anything other than conservation and might sometimes speak out on important topics such as the future of agriculture, farming and creating a healthier and more beautiful environment. **Dame Helen Ghosh, Director-General**, added that there was a distinction between engaging in politics and engaging in policy, and it was

therefore relevant for the Trust to share its views on issues such as Brexit and aspects of Government policy relating to heritage.

**Edmund Marriage from Leominster** was concerned about the condition of Sites of Special Scientific Interest in Wales which were in a poor condition since the Trust had been required to remove grazing animals. The Porchester, Southampton and Saville reports had helped to highlight the complex issues involved in managing the countryside and wildlife. Perhaps these could be revisited.

**Mark Harold, Director of Land & Nature**, explained that it was important for the Trust to put itself at the forefront of scientific work in a variety of areas, particularly relating to nature conservation and farming given the two went hand-in-hand. The new staff role of Nature & Science Director recognised the importance of the Trust's ability to look at existing research and commission new work to ensure the Trust was delivering its best work on the ground.

**Isobel Croft from Shropshire** felt that publicly engaging with Pride had proved controversial for some members and asked if it had been in the Trust's best interests to address sexuality so explicitly.

**John Orna-Ornstein, Director of Curation & Experience**, explained that the Trust had engaged with the 50th anniversary of the decriminalisation of homosexuality because it enabled the Trust to tell important stories about its places, some of which had been hidden. Kingston Lacy was an example of an historic home which had been shaped by William John Bankes's sexuality and the fact that he had had to flee the country as a result of that. The story of Kingston Lacy could not be adequately told without being open about this aspect of its history. The Trust took part in hundreds of community events every year, and a number of staff had participated in Pride marches for several years. This was one example of how the Trust was as much for the LGBTQ community as it was for everyone else.

**Stephen Green from Carmarthen** sought assurance that the Trust would not repeat its recent request of volunteers at Felbrigg Hall to wear rainbow lanyards, nor repeat any questions about gender and sexuality in volunteer surveys, nor repeat any stories about the private lives of previous owners of Trust properties. He

hoped that the Trust would return to its core purpose of conservation for the benefit of everyone.

**Tim Parker, Chair**, explained that the Trust sought always to be inclusive and did not specifically campaign on behalf of any particular group. The vast majority of its properties provided a completely conventional and expected presentation of its work. The Trust did not run a centralised structure and occasionally local decisions, such as the wearing of rainbow lanyards, might be made which, with the benefit of hindsight, could have been small misjudgements. To capture an example and blow it out of all proportion, making it a metaphor for the whole Trust becoming politically correct, was an incorrect case to make. The Trust was and would continue to be the broadest of churches with the intention of being an inclusive organisation. This was the same for every major national body in the UK. These days everybody had the right to a voice in a kinder society where people were not marginalised, and it was right that the Trust should be a part of that.

**Nick Boulter, from Dorset**, recognised that in some communities the Trust was a dominant landowner. When it came to making investment decisions such as those mentioned earlier about the Lake District, and in relation to Studland which was raised last year, the Trust's triple-lock approach took account of people, environments and conservation and nature. Would the Board consider broadening this to a quadruple-lock approach so that the views of communities could be taken into account in the Trust's approach to decision-making?

**Helen Ghosh, Director-General**, commented that she felt a good outcome had been achieved at Studland (which had been the subject of a members' resolution last year) for all parties following further consultation and discussion. When considering any issue, particularly any involving land, the Trust had to consider the interests of the local community within the broader community, and that of the nation. It was just as important to listen to quieter voices as much as the louder ones. The Trust was thinking more consistently about how it consulted with people, and this should support the work the Trust was doing on nature and the environment.

**Gordon Sim from Gloucestershire** hoped that the Trust would fight INEOS in its attempts to access Trust land for fracking. Evidence showed that fracking led to industrialisation and land pollution, which as a charity interested in conservation, the Trust should avoid.

**Mark Harold, Director of Land & Nature**, explained that the Trust did not support fracking on its land, a position which was made clear on its website. On the evidence currently available, there was no prospect of the Trust changing its position on fracking at this time.

**Julia Munny from Oxfordshire** asked if administration arrangements could be improved to enable supporters to make donations with Gift Aid when they were visiting a property. On three different occasions, each at different places, this had not been possible for varying reasons and a promised telephone call had not been followed up.

**Hilary McGrady, Chief Operating Officer**, apologised for these difficulties and undertook to look into them. Anyone who had experienced this problem was welcome to come and talk to her.

**Roseanne Williams from London** congratulated the Trust on its performance and fundraising results for the last year. Referring to the Annual Report and Financial Statements, Ms Williams queried an unidentified long lease of £21 million, of which £6.8 million had been received with the remainder to come. Was the Trust confident the remaining funds would be forthcoming?

**Helen Ghosh, Director-General**, explained that for reasons relating to the nature of the transaction its identity could not be disclosed in the Accounts. However, the Trust remained confident that the remainder of the funds would crystallise.

**Edward Leigh-Pemberton from Farringdon** commented that the Ankerwycke Farm buildings near Runnymede had been in need of repair for 15 years. What assurance could the Trust give that the necessary resources would be made available for their repair and what was the timescale for their completion?

**Mark Harold, Director of Land & Nature**, explained that the farm buildings had been in poor condition when they had come to the Trust in 1998 and acknowledged the concerns about the pace at which the Trust had been able to address this. This related to the wider issue about prioritisation of work and the demands on resources, which was why the Trust was currently introducing estate management plans through to 2019. These plans would look at all estate assets and how they would help the Trust pay for its other nature and conservation work. Additional sources of funding were being reviewed where specific business cases offered

a good rate of return. While it was fair to say that conservation work or investment in visitor engagement work took precedence over commercial investment opportunities, the regional team was looking at the ten-year plans to determine when they could start investing in unused and redundant farm buildings.

**Cristina George from Wiltshire** asked whether the appointment of a new Director-General marked the right time for the Trust to take a lead among other charities to review the high salaries of senior executives so that more could be invested in its core work.

**Tim Parker, Chair**, explained that the remuneration of the Trust's staff was overseen by the Board's Senior Management Remuneration Committee which he chaired. The staff were paid at levels comparable to those of other large charities. This was less than staff could expect to earn in the private sector, and compared favourably to levels paid in the Civil Service. It was understandable that people wanted as much of their subscriptions and donations to go towards their intended cause, and this meant that the charity needed people who were best placed to manage it from an administrative perspective. The idea that staff should be expected to draw a discounted salary because they worked for a charity was somewhat misplaced and could lead to the loss of staff which would not be in the charity's interests.

**Caroline Kirby from West Sussex** asked for future voting forms to provide clearer instructions about how to vote and how to appoint a proxy to vote on a member's behalf, adding that this might encourage greater participating in voting matters.

**Paul Boniface, The Secretary**, explained that the voting papers in the AGM booklet and the leaflet in the delegate packs for members attending the AGM explained the voting arrangements as simply as possible. Anyone who had specific concerns or suggestions was welcome to raise them after the meeting.

**Jeff Wood from Northamptonshire** queried the reference in the Annual Report to monies spent on 'internal consultancy' and asked what this represented.

**Peter Vermeulen, Chief Financial Officer**, explained that the internal consultancy was made up of the Trust's own specialist staff so these monies represented internal staff costs.

**Emily Knowles** asked via the webchat what the Trust was doing to encourage more students and young people to become members.

**Jackie Jordan, Director of Brand, Marketing & Supporter Development**, explained that the Trust offered a 50% discount on standard membership rates to anyone aged from 13 to 26. The Trust was also developing relationships with universities such as Bradford, Leicester and Oxford among others, to encourage young people to connect and develop their interest in conservation and cultural heritage.

**Tim Roberson from Surrey** was interested in the way the performance of individual properties was measured, and in particular the measure of the number of visitors who rated their visit as 'very enjoyable'. What proportion of visitors was sampled in the visitor survey, how were visitors selected to take part in the survey and what assurance was there that the results were sufficiently representative of all property visits?

**Hilary McGrady, Chief Operating Officer**, explained that the Trust started measuring visitor experience about seven years ago and it included an amalgam of different measurements from service to infrastructure. Given this broad spread and the desire to respond to the things visitors most wanted the Trust to improve upon, the survey focused on service scores. Up to about three years ago some visitors were invited to complete a paper survey. This was changed to the current method of sending survey invitations to about 1% of all visitors. Receiving the survey depends on two things: the visitor providing their email address with permission to use it; and whether the Trust has already recently been in touch by email because the Trust did not want to send too many messages to someone. Some properties which did not have access to technology would continue to use paper surveys. This year the 1% response target (which represents industry standard) was achieved – about 200,000 people. This gave a reasonably robust response for the Trust to rely on and to inform any decisions about how to improve visitor experience.

**John Price from Surrey** explained that power stations were on the brink of extinction and asked if the Trust would take a lead, with other parties, to determine whether two power stations could be preserved.

**John Orna-Ornstein, Director of Curation & Experience**, explained that the Trust cared for a variety

of wonderful historic properties and buildings. The Trust was thinking proactively about what it should look after for the future, and this included what it should acquire or work with others to support going forward.

**Rachel Cotterill from Gloucestershire** commented that the majority of people attending the AGM seemed to be those who could afford to pay for their membership, and asked if the Trust had any initiatives to reach out to different socioeconomic groups.

**Jackie Jordan, Director of Brand, Marketing & Supporter Development**, explained that the Trust was developing a programme which would help it reach more supporters through its membership and visitor offers, concessions and corporate partners. The Trust had also launched a links pass and was working with the NHS, disability charities and local authorities to determine how groups could benefit from discounted access to properties. There were plenty of opportunities to do more and the Trust would launch more of them as they became available.

**Adrian Philips from Gloucestershire** commented that the Trust had been subject to a flood of critical press in certain parts of the media, and asked what steps had been taken to proactively share good stories such as those heard in the Chair's and Director-General's speeches today so they could be read and heard by wider audiences.

**Tim Parker, Chair**, explained that many people took an interest in the Trust's activities, including both positive and negative reporting by the media. An extensive interview had recently been published in *The Times*, and the BBC had broadcast a piece on the Trust's membership having reached the milestone of five million members. The Chair's interview with Andrew Marr was due to be broadcast on Remembrance Sunday.

**Bruce Baker-Johnson from Hampshire** felt that the Trust should do more to encourage young children's interest, suggesting a membership for younger people would be a popular offer.

**Helen Ghosh, Director-General**, agreed and commented that a junior membership offer would be launched next year.

**Edmund Gray from Oxford** asked why, if the acquisition of Thorneythwaite Farm was not for rewilding purposes, the Trust paid £950,000 which was £200,000 more

than the guide price and regarded as substantially above the market value? In doing so, the Trust had outbid an adjacent farmer who would have continued traditional farming on the land. Why was an inflated price paid?

**Mark Harold, Director of Land & Nature**, explained that the Trust had no plans to rewild the farmland, but to consolidate its holdings in the area to continue farming Herdwick sheep and other traditions in parallel with promoting wildlife in the area. The land had been acquired through public auction at a price which was within a professional valuation.

**Michael St John Parker from Oxfordshire** queried why the reported number of volunteers had reduced from 70,000 to 60,000. He was concerned to hear reports that some volunteers felt under strain because of new policies around opening times at properties, and asked what the Trust was doing to attract more volunteers, including younger volunteers.

**Jackie Jordan, Director of Brand, Marketing & Supporter Development**, explained that the Trust was hugely grateful to the 65,000 people who had volunteered for the Trust in the last year. This was 2,500 more people than the year before. Some volunteers were contributing more hours and the Trust was ensuring that these arrangements were mutually agreeable. The Trust was considering the variety of volunteering opportunities on offer and the training needed to support volunteers to ensure they felt well equipped and supported in their roles.

**Liz Staples from Staffordshire** who was a retail volunteer asked why the implementation of new tills across the Trust was taking a long time. This was affecting new stock which could not yet be sold until the new tills were in place.

**Hilary McGrady, Chief Operating Officer**, explained that the roll out of new tills was currently in process. This was being undertaken on a region by region basis with positive feedback from the new systems. All outlets in the East of England had been completed, with the Midlands opting to be the last region for their installations which would begin shortly.

5. Adoption of the Annual Report and Financial Statements for 2016/17

The resolution to adopt the Annual Report and Financial Statements for 2016/17 was proposed by Paul Boniface, the Secretary, on behalf of the Chair, and seconded by David Smart, Trustee.

The resolution was carried on a show of hands.

6. Appointment of Auditor

The resolution to appoint KPMG LLP as external auditor for the period until the next Annual General Meeting was proposed by Paul Boniface, The Secretary, on behalf of the Chair, and seconded by Michael Day, Trustee.

The resolution was carried on a show of hands.

7. Elections to the Council

**Paul Boniface, The Secretary**, announced the results of the ballot for elections to the Council and thanked those who had stood. 20 candidates had put themselves forward for election; one withdrew at mid-point.

The voting results were as follows:

Sarah Green	19,439	Elected
Steve Anderson	24,428	Re-elected
Virginia Llado-Buisan	10,084	
Raymond Williams	7,301	
Leigh McManus	8,163	
Guy Trehane	16,099	Elected
Emma Mee	18,189	Elected
Michael Tavener	5,049	
Elizabeth Staples	8,956	
Inga Grimsey	15,226	
Christopher Catling	21,622	Elected
Edel Trainor	11,363	
Stephen Cox	11,141	
Bella Mezger	9,513	
Joff Whitten	7,741	
Caroline Kay	17,579	Elected
Duncan Mackay	11,786	
Grevel Lindop	13,052	
Caroline Jarrold	9,744	

8. Members' resolution about the A303 at Stonehenge

**At the beginning of this year the Government's agency, Highways England, unveiled its plan to upgrade the A303 to an 'expressway' with a short, 2.9km (1.8 mile) tunnel through the 5.4km (3.4 mile) wide Stonehenge World Heritage Site (WHS). If the plan were to go ahead an entirely new dual carriageway, deep cuttings and tunnel entrances would be introduced on a brutal scale into this country's premier archaeological landscape. The expanded road would draw significantly more traffic into the WHS and the new alignment would blight currently tranquil areas with noise and light pollution. Flyover junctions would intrude on the setting of the WHS at both its eastern and western boundaries. The road scheme threatens permanent loss and damage to archaeology including at Blick Mead, a newly discovered and uniquely significant Mesolithic site.**

**Despite its reservations, for example, about the location of the western tunnel portals and wildlife, the National Trust supports the road scheme in principle, seeing advantages in improvements to the heart of the WHS. There are, however, widespread objections to the scheme from leading conservation bodies, numerous archaeologists with unparalleled expertise in the Stonehenge landscape and thousands of petitioners from all over the world.**

**The UK branch of the International Council on Monuments and Sites, UNESCO's advisers on UK World Heritage Sites, has objected to the A303 proposals in the strongest terms: 'To suggest that this damage can be mitigated by benefits brought by the tunnel to the centre of the WHS, is to fundamentally misunderstand the commitments made to sustain OUV (Outstanding Universal Value) at the time of inscription of the property on the World Heritage List.' UNESCO now echoes this concern and suggests that its World Heritage Committee should urge the UK Government to consider a southern bypass for the A303 or 'longer tunnel options to remove dual carriageway cuttings from the property.'**

**We invite members to call upon the National Trust to undertake all of the following:**

**to reaffirm, in relation to the WHS at Stonehenge, its founding purpose to protect special places and promote access to them;**

**to respect World Heritage Convention obligations, and the requirements of planning policy and the WHS Management Plan for the protection of the *whole* WHS and its setting and argue for these obligations and requirements to be met;**

**to acknowledge that to place only part of the A303 at Stonehenge in a tunnel to remove traffic blight from the centre of the WHS would damage other parts of the WHS for ever;**

**to concur with other conservation and environmental bodies and insist, should the Government consider A303 road widening to be necessary, that any road tunnel and/or engineering should cause no further damage to the 10 square miles of archaeological landscape of the WHS, designated as of outstanding universal value to mankind and acknowledged by UNESCO to be a 'landscape without parallel'; and**

**to work with others to seek solutions to A303 part-time congestion and associated rat-running at weekends and holiday times that do not involve damaging the WHS or its setting.**

The resolution was proposed by **Kate Fielden from Wiltshire** who used an outline map of the Stonehenge World Heritage Site to illustrate the extent of the scheduled ancient monuments and the position of the A303 which runs from east to west across the site just south of the Stonehenge monument. Ms Fielden explained that both Stonehenge and Avebury had been designated World Heritage Sites for their Neolithic and Bronze Age remains dating back over 5,000 years. Their landscapes, each around 10 square miles, were considered to be of Outstanding Universal Value, including buried archaeology.

Under UNESCO's World Heritage Convention and guidance, the Government was committed to protect the whole WHS and its boundaries setting, yet the landscape was threatened by plans for a major road engineering project involving a new four-lane expressway at each end of a 1.8-mile twin-bored tunnel. While traffic on the existing A303 might impact the landscape at certain times, the damage caused by the new road scheme would cause devastating and permanent damage. This would involve deep cuttings, tunnel entrances and flyover junctions with the associated lights, signage and other needs associated with the new road.

The Trust's stated view that the correct design and mitigation would minimise the physical impacts of this major infrastructure project did not seem realistic. Many archaeologists and other specialists in the Stonehenge landscape considered a bypass of the entire site was essential. A great majority of over 9,000 consultees had objected to a short tunnel, with national environmental NGOs expressing dismay at the proposal. UNESCO's World Heritage Committee felt that significant damage could not be offset by the benefits of a short tunnel at the centre of the site and recommended that alternative options be explored within an extended consultation period.

The Government seemed ready to sacrifice a great swathe of world renowned heritage to widen a trunk road, and UNESCO could remove Stonehenge and Avebury from the World Heritage list. Did the Trust wish to be party to such decisions? In view of UNESCO's guidance and advice, and for the sake of future generations, the Board of Trustees was invited to follow a set of reasonable principles and step back from the line on which the National Trust's reputation for landscape and heritage conservation now stood.

The resolution was seconded by **Tom Holland from London** who had grown up near Salisbury, close to Stonehenge, and was familiar with the impact that occasional heavy traffic had on the local area. He felt that the scheme to which the National Trust was lending its support came at too high a price. Archaeology would be destroyed, including the Mesolithic site of Blick Mead, through an invasion of concrete and tarmac that would never be removed. The proposed solutions to address the current traffic problems were not worth the sacrifice of Blick Mead and other archaeological sites. Without the National Trust's support, it was possible that the proposed road scheme would fail, and members were urged to support the resolution.

**Professor Carys Swanwick, Trustee**, responded on behalf of the Board of Trustees. Professor Swanwick had worked in the field of landscape planning and understood the practical challenges involved in balancing the need to protect rich archaeological landscapes with the demands of modern society. The traffic problems on the A303 and their impact on Stonehenge would resolve themselves. Successive Governments had tried to address them for over 30 years and failed. Tackling the problem was a strategic

priority for the current Government which presented a significant opportunity as well as a challenge for the World Heritage Site.

Many options had been examined over the years, including a southern bypass and a longer tunnel, all of which posed difficult environmental challenges. At a cost of £1.4 billion, the proposed tunnel scheme would be the longest of its type in the UK. The Trust believed that, if sited and designed well, a tunnel of just under two miles in length would significantly enhance and protect the Stonehenge landscape.

The Trust took its role as champion and guardian of this World Heritage Site seriously. The Trust had looked after the landscape for 90 years, the last 20 in partnership with others to restore the landscape setting of the stones and their surrounding monuments. Despite this, the queues of traffic on the A303 without doubt detracted significantly from the experience of this special landscape. The road sliced through the site, separating some monuments from others and restricting access to two-thirds of the site.

When the road improvement scheme was announced in 2014, the Government's proposals would have been damaging. Having worked closely with partners, the Trust had sought and secured significant changes in Highways England's approach to the scheme. The Trust was clear on where the red lines were; the tunnel must be bored deep below any archaeology with entrances precisely located and designed to minimise their impact on the landscape and archaeology. Any impact that the short amount of new road needed had in the World Heritage Site must be carefully mitigated. Finally, people must be better able to enjoy and understand the World Heritage Site. In the past few weeks, Highways England had announced a much improved route as a result of both public consultation and pressure from the Trust and its partners.

The Trust remained confident that Highways England was focused on resolving any remaining issues, and would continue to hold Highways England to account on reuniting this very special landscape.

**A member** expressed concern that the Trust was involved with the organisation which seemed to be encouraging traffic generation, particularly in an area which would have a deleterious impact on landscape, habitat, heritage, carbon emissions and air pollution.

It felt like an ageless period of history was being considered less important than temporary need.

**Simon Norton from London** felt a dual carriageway at Stonehenge was inappropriate, and could lead in future to the building of an expressway from London to the West Country through the Blackdown Hills AONB. The scheme did not include a visitor plan for Stonehenge, similar to the scheme at Hindhead which did not include one either, meaning that coaches travelling direct from London to Portsmouth did not give passengers the opportunity to see the Devil's Punch Bowl. Similar plans for the expressway did not align with the Trust's ambitions for inclusivity and prevented people without access to cars from seeing places of beauty.

**Tom Oliver from London** endorsed the Chair's earlier remarks about the direction of the Trust's strategy. He also felt that the Highways Agency was doing a good job in difficult circumstances to plan a new road scheme through the World Heritage Site. However, this would have the impact of risking the integrity of the site, which felt like a step too far for the Trust.

**Andrew Cotterill from Gloucestershire** felt that if the Trust were to take a neutral position the Government could decide to build a dual carriageway across the whole site, which could lead to more difficulties in future. A longer tunnel offered the benefit of having more of the road underground.

**Janice Hassett from Wiltshire** was the founder of Stonehenge Traffic Action Group. She suggested that the majority of members present were not local to Stonehenge and were therefore unfamiliar with the high levels of congestion in surrounding villages caused by traffic trying to avoid the A303. The nearby village of Shrewton was particularly affected in this way; during a three-week period in September the speed indicator devices that had been installed indicated 43,000 vehicles had used Shrewton as a rat-run. The village was home to elderly people and families with young children and had no pavements, and the heavy traffic was also causing damage to cottages. The residents hoped a balance could be found between the needs of the historic landscape and the needs of the people who lived in the surrounding villages; a tunnel or dual carriageway offered a good solution.

**A member from Wiltshire** recalled a childhood visit to Stonehenge when she was able to get close to the

stones and touch them. Building a bypass a few miles away would avoid the need for a tunnel, and would avoid the destruction of a landscape that could not be retrieved.

**Caroline Kay from Wiltshire** declared an interest as a member of the Trust's South West Regional Advisory Board. While being an advocate of a much longer tunnel at Stonehenge than the one currently planned, she was conscious of how hard the Trust's staff had worked to help achieve the best possible outcome which had already been under discussion for more than 30 years. For better or worse, there were strong arguments for increasing capacity on the A303 and the plans could have crystallised differently from those currently proposed. For example, a surface road could carry more traffic alongside the stones, impacting the closer archaeology, or a cheaper 'cut and cover' tunnel for the entire length would damage the surface archaeology. The current proposed solution was far preferable to either of these alternative solutions, and both the Trust's and Historic England's professional teams would strive to make it work as best as it possibly could. There had not been sufficient discussion about the benefits of the proposed scheme – for example, the increased knowledge about the landscape that might be achieved from any archaeological investigation conducted alongside the scheme. It would be wonderful to wander the full length of the Avenue to the River Avon to understand how the monuments and landscape fit together.

**Hannah Kidner from Wiltshire** felt that the short-term benefits offered by a tunnel should be balanced by the need to protect presently undiscovered archaeology and the needs of future generations.

**Hal Chandler from Wiltshire** felt that discussions over 30 years were more than sufficient and a solution needed to be found, not least for the benefit of residents whose communities were being impacted by the daily traffic seeking to avoid the congested areas of the A303 at Stonehenge. He supported the Trust's pragmatic approach which appeared to be the best solution that could realistically be achieved. If the tunnel proposal was rejected, the landscape and local residents would continue to suffer. He urged members to vote against the resolution.

**Gerard Noel** explained that he had been the Trust's agent responsible for Stonehenge in the 1950s and

1960s and that the subject of the road had been ongoing at that time. He explained that the archaeological site surrounding Stonehenge extended further than many people were aware, reaching as far south as Amesbury. His own solution for the area involved taking the A303 south without excavation and instead build an elevated road on foreign soil, such as Devon Red Sandstone, to avoid archaeological damage.

**Kate Freeman from Wiltshire** reminded members that the motion asked for the Trust to consider its principles of conservation and review its position, it was not asking members to vote for or against the road scheme. The Trust's support for the scheme had been pivotal to achieving the current proposals. However, it was not clear why conservation organisations such as the Trust would wish to be involved in a road scheme which would damage its environment. Had the Trust sought further opinion beyond Highways England and their consultants, or civil engineers with conservation experience?

**Ian Wilson, Assistant Director for the South West**, explained that the Trust had not taken direct advice from independent transport experts but it had worked closely with Wiltshire Council. About 35 different routes had been developed over the past 30 years, each producing a tunnel or dual carriageway solution. The current scheme presented a compelling solution which would benefit the World Heritage Site.

**David Wilson from London** felt that supporting the motion would help the Trust's negotiations to improve the scheme further and urged members to vote in favour of it.

**Bob London from Devon** explained that his neighbouring county, Cornwall, was the poorest in England based on a calculation of average salaries. A contributory factor was the lack of good communications between the south west and the rest of the country. The proposed solution of a 2.9km tunnel was a pragmatic compromise to the traffic problems along the Stonehenge stretch of the A303 with the additional benefit of improving communications and transport to Devon and Cornwall.

**Cate Le Grice** had previously represented South West CPRE and other environmental organisations. The former Regional Assembly had previously rejected proposals for a dual carriageway on the basis that the

economic benefits did not justify the cost and impact on the environment of such a scheme. Analysis indicated that traffic did not travel the entire east to west length of the A303 but instead the route served shorter journeys at various points along it. By supporting the scheme, the Trust was contradicting its conservation aims. Any dual carriageway would ultimately experience the problems of other dual carriageways caused by speeding traffic, meaning that vehicles would be diverted around accidents through all the places that were seeking relief.

In summing up for the Board of Trustees, **Professor Swanwick** felt that it was clear that everyone shared a common understanding of the international importance of the World Heritage Site at Stonehenge and inevitably views varied considerably on the impacts and benefits of the proposed A303 scheme. Following decades of indecision by the various authorities involved, now was the time to act. The Board of Trustees felt the proposed tunnel was the best solution available and that it would enhance and protect this special place. The Trust was focused on holding Highways England to account and then to complete this scheme which would allow this outstanding archaeological landscape finally to be reunited. Having listened to everybody's views, Professor Swanwick urged members to vote against the resolution to enable the Trust to continue to influence the scheme and achieve the best possible solution.

In her closing statement, **Kate Fielden** explained that the Trust was in danger of compromising its conservation principles by supporting a damaging and unpopular road scheme against UNESCO's advice. UNESCO had already suggested that alternative options be considered and that the site's heritage designation was at risk of being removed. The Stonehenge landscape was blighted by traffic at times, but other solutions were available to protect it, including a longer tunnel. Ms Fielden hoped the Board of Trustees would reconsider its approach, including the possible consequences of not doing so, in order to prevent further damage to, and properly protect, this internationally famous landscape. For everyone's most ancient past, and for future generations, members were encouraged to vote in favour of the resolution.

**The Chair** thanked the speakers for their final comments. Following a show of hands, a ballot was held. The votes cast at the meeting were added to those of the members who had voted in advance of the meeting.

The results of the ballot were as follows:

	For	Against
Specified	21,898	23,303
Discretionary	5	6,710
Absentions	11,089	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>21,903</b>	<b>30,013</b>

The resolution was not carried.

With the agreement of the members present the meeting was adjourned for a short period and was reconvened after lunch.

#### 9. Members' resolution for a cessation of trail hunting, exempt hunting and hound exercise

**That the members agree that the National Trust will not permit trail hunting, exempt hunting and hound exercise on their land, to prevent potential illegal activity in breach of The Hunting Act 2004 and The Protection of Badgers Act 1992 and to prevent damage to other flora and fauna by hunts, their hounds and their followers.**

The resolution was proposed by **Helen Beynon from Leicestershire** who wished to bring the cruel reality of trail hunting to the attention of members and the Board of Trustees. Ms Beynon's first experience of this activity was earlier in the year when she had witnessed people being threatened and pelted with manure by hunt supporters, including a man with a terrier who had told her he had been out blocking badger sets ready for the hunt. Ms Beynon described further her experience of seeing foxes chased by hunts. The impact on animals went beyond foxes and badgers, and included hares and stags.

Ms Beynon told members that a Judge had recently described the activities of a member of a trail hunt in 2011 as 'cynical subterfuge', and a former head of the Crown Prosecution Service later wrote that reviewed evidence left the continuance of traditional fox hunting in no doubt. A report commissioned by the International Fund for Animal Welfare more recently suggested that only four hunts from over 443 were likely to have been hunting a trail. A complaint to the Charity Commission indicated that there was demonstrable evidence of illegal hunting, assault and public order infringements

during hunts on National Trust land. This had a deleterious effect on wildlife conservation – one of the Trust's main aims.

Many wildlife experts and charities had indicated their support for this resolution. Ms Beynon urged members to add their support in favour of the resolution.

The resolution was seconded by **Sally Heesom from Lancashire**. She explained that the Trust had made a number of changes to its licence requirements for trail hunting. However, history showed that hunts had flouted the terms of those licences despite the obligations they imposed. The Trust had acknowledged that it lacked the resources to sufficiently monitor trail-hunting activities on its land and hunts were effectively left to self-monitor.

Self-monitoring raised a variety of issues, with a hunt spokesman indicating this might be three to four accidental kills per hunt each year. Independent monitors had reported that there were often two to three kills per hunt during a single meet. How could such a discrepancy come about? A hunt's website indicated that hounds could often be four to five miles away from the huntsman, which meant the hounds were unsupervised and there was no safety assurance for wildlife. The dismissal by the Trust of video footage of a stag hunt taking place in a conservation area suggested the Trust was complicit in these activities given that the licences from the Trust were for trail hunting and nothing more.

In response to the 2004 Hunting Act, the Masters of Foxhounds Association developed trail hunting so that hunts could continue with their activities as before. However, the evidence collected by IFAW concluded that only 1% of hunts were involved in laying trails. With the lack of evidence of trails being laid, and given that hounds were trained to follow an animal-based scent, it was difficult to understand how the Trust would monitor and enforce the use of artificial scents. Hunts took place across different locations looked after by different landowners so it was also unclear how the crossovers would be managed when hunts spanned more than one landowner's territory.

It was clear that hunts could not be trusted to follow artificial trails and the Trust had insufficient resources to monitor the hunts. The only way of ensuring animal safety and conservation on Trust land was to lobby for an outright ban on any form of hunting.

**Orna NiChionna, Trustee and Deputy Chair**, responded on behalf of the Board of Trustees. She acknowledged that trail hunting was a polarised subject which should not be driven by emotion. The Trust dealt with the matter as its staff and volunteers, and members and visitors, experienced it on the ground. After the ban on hunting was introduced in 2004, former live hunts switched to trail hunts which were legally permitted. Over the years the Trust had identified some persistent problems with some hunts that needed to be addressed. The Trust had recently decided to act to ensure trail hunting was pursued responsibly. This included the use of artificial scents to reduce the chance of foxes and other animals being accidentally chased and killed, and the banning of the use of terrier men who, in the Trust's view, had no role in trail hunting. Transparency was vital which was why hunts notified the days on which they would be on Trust land and this would be reflected on the Trust's website. Consultation with hunts and the police was in hand to determine how this would be enforced responsibly, given the potential for hunts and anti-hunt protestors to clash.

Ms NiChionna explained the Trust's thinking behind these steps. Trail hunting was popular in many rural areas with almost 300 hunts across the land. Much was on horseback but some was also on foot, especially in the Lake District and Wales. Many small rural businesses benefitted from it, as they did from drag hunting, such as livery yards, kennels, farriers and saddlers. Pubs, restaurants and guesthouses also benefited if people came from the cities to follow country pursuits.

In Ms NiChionna's previous role of Trustee and then Chair of the Soil Association, she had worked closely with organic farmers and processors, most of whom were based in the countryside. She understood the pressures that rural communities faced and how important it was to hold the social fabric and community spirit in such areas. Trail hunting had a role here among many other country pursuits. However, unlike other pursuits, trail hunting was not always pursued responsibly and when things went wrong they could become unpleasant. Uncontrolled hounds hunted and killed wildlife, with terrier men in attendance, or using inappropriate routes across sensitive land all stretched the tolerance of the Trust's staff, volunteers, members and visitors.

The Trust's actions addressed these risks, including the use of artificial scents because the Trust believed

it made it less likely that wildlife would be chased and killed. Terrier men had no place in a legally and responsibly managed hunt that was not deliberately chasing wildlife, so the Trust had banned them. Responsible hunts had nothing to fear and were welcomed. However, the Trust would observe the impact of its decisions and would revoke licences where necessary, as had been done in the past.

In closing, Ms NiChionna reminded members that the Trust's motto was *for ever, for everyone*. Conservation and looking after the special places in its care was the top priority. The Trust also wanted to be as generous as it could to as many people as it could, pursuing legal activities on its land even if those activities did not appeal to all. The revised arrangements for trail hunting would, the Trust believed, create the conditions for the balance of these aims, and this was why the Board of Trustees recommended that members vote against the resolution.

**Julie Pearce from Worcestershire** recounted her memories of people who supported hunts to be violent and aggressive. Many had paid a lot of money to participate and did not welcome anti-hunt protestors. Presumably hunts paid the Trust to use its land, and if the hunts stopped then so too would that income.

**Peter Martin** was Chair of the Badger Trust. He explained that the matter in debate was one for the Trust's Board and not its members. The Board of Trustees had a duty of care to ensure that illegal activity did not take place on the Trust's land. It was clear the Trust had limited resources so it should ensure sufficient resources were made available to guard against illegal activity, and if it could not then the activities should be banned until such time as the Trust understood how the illegal killing of wildlife could be prevented.

**Baroness Mallalieu from Exmoor** did not recognise the descriptions given as examples of illegal activity which should rightly be reported to the police. There had never been a successful conviction since the ban came into effect for hunting on the Trust's land. With a membership of 5 million there were bound to be controversial issues over which members held differing views. Many members might agree with the view that campaigning organisations should not use the Trust to enforce their views on others. Everyone was entitled to air their opinions publicly, but using the Trust and diverting its activities, staff and resources was wrong;

and this should be a strong message for the League Against Cruel Sports and the Countryside Alliance, of which Baroness Mallalieu was a member, and other organisations connected with rural life and interests. The case for changes in the law could be argued elsewhere, but they should not be brought to or damage the National Trust.

**George Bowyer from Buckinghamshire** did not support the resolution because he felt it was not the Trust's role to second guess the Government. Was the Trust aware that supporters of the resolution had been putting up fake notices which suggested the Board of Trustees also supported it? There seemed to be falsities on both sides of the argument.

**Ivor Annetts from Devon** had monitored over 100 hunts shortly after the Hunting Act came into force. There had been no evidence of trail hunting – everything he witnessed had been consistent with traditional wild animal hunting. Gaining a successful conviction was extremely difficult as it involved filming a fox, with the huntsman failing to call the hounds back. The police were likely aware that traditional hunting was continuing but had neither the time nor the resources to deal with it. How could the Trust's situation be any different?

**Sally Heesom, who had seconded the resolution**, explained that neither she nor the lead proposer, Helen Beynon, were members of any special interest or campaigning groups. On the question raised about the cost of trail-hunting licences and the income they generated, on the basis that licences were likely to cost £150, 67 licensed hunts would generate just over £10,000 a year for the Trust. A question was raised in the early part of the meeting about the salaries of senior staff, and by comparison £10,000 a year was not a great deal. The Trust should consider its membership and the income generated from members.

**Jeanne Berry from Gloucestershire** lived in a small hamlet with a woodland which was routinely rampaged by a local hunt. Only by obtaining an Anti-Social Behaviour Order was the hunt deterred from returning. The Master of that hunt acknowledged during an interview on Radio 4 that the hounds could not be controlled. Many domestic pets were also killed during hunts, as well as wild animals.

**Edmund Marriage from Dorset** told members it was important to realise that the Trust was involved in the

management of wildlife, including predators, of which the fox was one. Evidence suggested that predation management through hunting was more humane than other methods and in many cases the only control method available. At the Trust's Annual General Meeting in 2006 the League Against Cruel Sports had called for a ban on the deer hunts' casualty service, or 'exempt hunting', on Trust land. Mr Marriage had been one of the speakers for the Trust's position at the time. The League's position had been significantly outvoted and the resolution was not carried. Mr Marriage explained how a high number of wildlife species were facing extinction from management neglect. Staghound success was one of the best examples of species management, and this could also be applied to other hunting roles. Three deer hunts contributed £10 million a year to the rural economy, and was a well-organised national wildlife management service. Predator control was a continuing problem and many precious species were becoming extinct. The only way to redress the situation was to take the welfare equation evidence and repeal the Hunting Act.

**A member** asked for information about how many of the Trust's tenants banned hunting with dogs on their land.

**Peter Bate from Somerset** felt that the members' meeting was not an appropriate forum to debate political topics such as trail hunting which was a matter for Parliament to determine.

**Paul Hayes from West Sussex** felt that a simple solution to trail hunting would be to ban it altogether. It would be too difficult to prove that hunts were using the permitted type of scent for trail hunts.

**Douglas Batchelor from Hampshire** explained he was the Vice President of the League Against Cruel Sports. Over 80% of the population supported the Government's position when the hunting of fox, deer and hare for sport became illegal 10 years ago; this was Parliament's decision whether people agreed with it or not. Mr Batchelor asked how the Trust would deal with hunts that ended with a fox, deer or hare being killed for sport, and would the Trust ban any hunts as a result?

**Roy Cartwright from Wiltshire** felt that there was no difference between trail hunting and fox hunting. Hunting belonged to the past and the Trust should ban all forms of it on its land.

**Carolyn Kirby from West Sussex** noted that the Board had recognised there were problems with certain hunts operating on its land and that the Trust would prohibit the use of animal-based scents. What steps would the Trust take to monitor this, and had the Trust considered the problems of the spread of disease by hounds running across its land from farm to farm?

**Patrick Begg, Rural Enterprise Director**, responded to a number of the questions raised by members so far. The fee for a trail hunting licence was £150 plus VAT; this covered the Trust's costs and did not generate any profit. The blocking of badger sets was illegal and should be reported to the police. The Trust's staff had been given clear guidance to remove any fake notices or posters which indicated the Trust's support for this resolution. A handful of tenants did not allow hunts on the Trust's land. The Trust had and would continue to revoke licences where it had been proven that hunts were in breach of the terms on which the licences were granted. The Trust would monitor hunts by sampling how they observed the licensing conditions; this included taking reports from staff who observed the activities from time to time, which was in parallel to tighter self-regulation by the hunts themselves under the Trust's new licensing conditions, and was similar to the approach taken with other legal outdoor activities.

**A member** felt that members and visitors would expect the Trust to take reasonable measures to ensure the law was not broken on any of its land that was owned, tenanted or otherwise occupied. It was easy to make allegations of illegal hunt activity but extremely difficult to prove it. Hunt servants could carry an app such as 'my walk' in their pocket in order to show where a trail had been laid which could be compared to the routes of other hunt servants who used the same app. The Trust would still need to use its own monitors to check compliance. An earlier speaker mentioned that we should not be driven by emotion, yet the Trust asked visitors about their experience. If a visitor saw a hunt go by on Trust land, it was likely they would say they did not enjoy that part of their visit.

**Lord Mancroft from Gloucestershire** was Chair of the Master of Foxhounds Association. He explained that the resolution was based on the premise that 40,000 people went out several times a week throughout the year to knowingly and willingly commit crimes. In the 200,000 hunting days since the ban, there had been 14 convictions which were all regretted. The Master

of Foxhounds Association provided a further layer of regulation, with much time spent on talking to and teaching hunts about how to lay trails properly and monitoring them. An earlier speaker mentioned they could not see the trails – this is because they are scent-based and therefore invisible. Most were laid very early in the morning when members of the public were less likely to observe it for practical reasons. Hunts which did not operate legally should be prosecuted and convicted. Where hunts were not prosecuted and convicted they were acting within the law.

**Robert Waley-Cohen from Warwickshire** supported Lord Mancroft's comments. Anyone who broke the law should be prosecuted, and the fact that there were less than two convictions a year indicated that claims were not proven. The Trust had a good licensing system in place, and licences were withdrawn when breaches of their terms were identified. The Trust was being used as a political football with a small number of members using the platform of this meeting as a megaphone to amplify their voice. The Board of Trustees should avoid being influenced in this way.

**William Morton** felt it had been revealing to have heard today that hunting was a means of pest control. Hunting was not an effective or humane means of achieving this. The debate was about trail hunting which should not involve the hunting of wildlife.

**A speaker** felt the debate was being dominated by members who supported the Countryside Alliance which was a campaigning organisation that sought to repeal the Hunting Act. The Trust should not be forced to use its charitable resources to monitor minority interests, and members were urged to support the resolution.

**Andy Birkett from Somerset** explained that the Hunting Act provided that any organisation which did not consistently monitor hunting on its land should face legal action. The resolution should either be supported or the Trust should be prosecuted for failure to comply with the law.

**A speaker** asked whether the Trust was going to instruct its tenants as to what they could or could not do on their land?

**Patrick Begg, Rural Enterprise Director**, explained that the terms of the previous licensing arrangements required tenants' permission to be sought and explicitly

received before the Trust granted any trail-hunting licences. This remained the case under the new licence procedures.

**A speaker** highlighted that the RSPCA was responsible for bringing prosecutions in relation to hunting. This was a political issue for that organisation to deal with and this could have a bearing on the low number of actions which were dealt with. With regard to licensing fees, perhaps the Trust could consider raising the fee from £150 plus VAT to £2,000 or more? This would cover the cost of staff employed specifically for monitoring trail hunts.

**A speaker** suggested that monitoring trail hunts could be undertaken by volunteers.

**Hazel Shepherd from Worcestershire** explained that trail-hunt scents were artificial and could be imported from the USA. Many members enjoyed following trail hunts over Trust land, not least given that trails could be laid in places which avoided busy roads and public areas.

**Jessica Leigh-Pemberton from Oxfordshire** drew members' attention to some misleading information. The resolution's supporting statement indicated that hunting with dogs had become illegal, when in fact it was not.

**Jane Clifford from Gloucestershire** wondered what impact any fake notices or posters that had been placed at some of the Trust's properties might have on the outcome of the voting on this resolution.

**Richard Hughes from Devon** hoped the resolution would be carried and would help put a stop to any form of hunting of animals, even though the outcome was not binding on the Trust either way.

In summing up for the Board of Trustees, **Ms NiChionna** explained that the changes being made to the licensing arrangements for trail hunts were substantial. The use of artificial scents would make a positive difference, making it much less likely that wildlife would be chased and killed. Terrier men would be banned, and there would be tighter controls on irresponsible trail hunting. These changes would ensure that trail hunting was genuinely trail hunting and not illegal hunting. The Trust was for ever, for everyone, and this included providing access for as many people as possible on its land, including all agencies, ethnicities and legal activities. Many responsible trail hunts used the Trust's land, and

the changes under the new licensing arrangements sought to eradicate irresponsible trail hunting. The Board of Trustees believed these proposals would achieve this, and this is why members were invited to vote against the resolution.

In her closing statement, **Helen Beynon** invited members to trust her accounts of the reality of some trail hunts which acted illegally. Opposers to the resolution had asserted that any hunts found acting illegally should and would be prosecuted, but the situation was not that simple and prosecutions were rare. Ms Beynon and Ms Heesom were not members of any campaigning organisation – they were ordinary members of the Trust who sought support from others to draw attention to the illegal hunting of wild animals under the guise of trail hunting and who called on the Trust to cease licensing the activity on its land. Some supporters of the resolution were people with children who would be frightened to come across a hunt on Trust land; others were concerned about the welfare of their domestic pets.

Ms Beynon had heard the Chair talk in the media about the importance of reconciling those who supported trail hunting with the aims of the charity. However, they were not compatible, and animals would continue to be chased and killed in ‘incidents’ which contravened the spirit of the ban. The Masters of two hunts had recently made published comments that nobody was surprised when foxes were killed and that hounds could not be restrained. Following the Government’s recent announcement, it seemed unlikely that the Hunting Act would be repealed, given so many people felt strongly about it.

The Trust was a conservation charity which could not afford to allow Sites of Special Scientific Interest to be vandalised. Yet Hambledon Hill was damaged twice by hunts which contradicted the Trust’s advice to dog owners who were asked to keep their dogs on leads in order to protect flora and fauna. The Trust’s core aim of conservation and its reputation should remain paramount.

The Trust had acknowledged that it did not have the resources to closely monitor hunts. Where would these resources come from? It had only taken a small group of members asking questions to prompt the Trust to review its licensing arrangements.

‘Help us keep the countryside a safe, healthy and enjoyable place for you and your dog, other visitors, wildlife and livestock’. This was quoted from the Trust’s website. Anyone who has seen a trail hunt would know that cannot be.

**The Chair** thanked the speakers for their final comments. Following a show of hands, a ballot was held. The votes cast at the meeting were added to those of the members who had voted in advance of the meeting. The results of the ballot were as follows:

	For	Against
Specified	28,629	27,525
Discretionary	2,057	3,460
Absentions	1,925	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>30,686</b>	<b>30,985</b>

The resolution was not carried.

## 10. Conclusion

**The Chair** thanked all for attending and watching online, and formally closed the 2017 Annual General Meeting.

If you'd like this information in an  
alternative format, please contact  
The Secretariat on 01793 817663

© National Trust 2018  
Registered charity no. 205846  
National Trust  
Heelis, Kemble Drive, Swindon SN2 2NA  
[www.nationaltrust.org.uk](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk)  
Typeset by Blacker Design (7036)  
Printed on 100% recycled paper