



## Minutes of the 65<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of the British Grassland Society

Held on 29<sup>th</sup> June 2009, at Greenmount Campus, Co. Antrim

**AGM Chairman:** Miss Sarah Byford.

Sufficient numbers were present for a quorum (31).

**Apologies:** Angus Golightly, George Fisher, Charles Barraclough, Nigel Young, Steve Peel, Roger Wilkins, John Slater and Don Wilkinson

- 1. Minutes of AGM Meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> July 2008:** Miss Byford asked those present to consider approval of the minutes of the 64<sup>th</sup> meeting.
- 2.** There were no matters arising from these minutes. All agreed to approve these minutes and they were signed by Miss Byford.
- 3. The report of the Trustees:** was contained within the summary of the financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2008 (available on the website or via the BGS office). The approval of the report was proposed by Colin Branston and seconded by Richard Ratcliffe.
- 4. Financial Report:** Jessica Buss reported that BGS achieved its target set by Trustees of not using investment income to support general activity of about £15,000 and a few thousand on top, which was boosted by the publishers of our scientific journal's sales of digital backdates being above expectation. This is not repeatable income as these are one off purchases. However, the journal itself continues to do well and the publishers indicate it's likely to continue supporting BGS overheads at a level of about £40,000 a year. The magazine also had a good year and now edited in house the costs are significantly reduced. Events had a tougher year because a few less people than in the budget can have a big impact, as a coach costs the same whether it is full or has empty seats. But they generally broke even give or take a little.

BGS investments took a large hit in the year losing about 30% of the value for those in shares, stocks and gilts in line with the market and other similar organisations' funds. Thankfully BGS's reliance on this to provide income to support general activity has reduced in the last two years and we have no need to cash in long-term investments in the foreseeable future. However, some of BGS's cash reserve, built up over the past two years will be investment in new activities in 2009, as explained under Agenda Item 8.

The approval of accounts was proposed by Tim Mayo and seconded by Colin Branston.

- 5. Subscription Rates:** there has not been an increase in many years but due to the current financial climate, subscription rates will remain unchanged this year. GFF rates will, however, increase to £2.50 per local society member, per year.
- 6. Constitution Amendments:** *additional wording in red.*

**Constitution section: 7. Membership**

(1) Membership is open to individuals over sixteen or organizations, including affiliated local societies or clubs *or corporate companies*, who are approved by the Trustees.

**Constitution section: 11. Quorum**

(3) The authorized representative of a member organization *or one representative of a corporate member* shall be counted in the quorum.

**Constitution section: 15. Representatives of Other Bodies**

(1) Any organization *or corporate company* that is a member of the Charity, including an affiliated grassland society or club, may nominate any person to act as its representative at any meeting of the Charity.

**Constitution section: 16. Officers and Trustees**

(3) A Trustee must be a member of the Charity or the nominated representative of an organization *or company* that is a member of the Charity.

**All agreed.**

**7. President's Report for 2008-2009:** *The full version of this is available on [www.britishgrassland.com](http://www.britishgrassland.com).* Sarah Byford delivered her report to the AGM, reflecting on her year as BGS President. Below are key extracts.

- a. **Summer Meeting in Holland:** the first Summer Meeting outside the UK was a great success with a higher number of younger members than usual. Sarah urges younger members to join the BGS and support the events to secure its future.
- b. **BGS and NFYFC Grassland Challenge:** with the launch of the Grassland Challenge last year, Sarah once again urged local societies to adopt the new initiative.
- c. **National Grassland Management Competition:** Emyr Jones was congratulated on winning and welcomed to the Summer Meeting.
- d. **FWGS AGM:** successful Farming Connect Organic Producer conference at Builth Wells.
- e. **Beating Fertiliser Price Rises:** Charlie Morgan spoke at two venues subsidised by the BGS, working to improve links with local societies.
- f. **Graham Copeman and Gordon Newman:** sad passing of two notable former BGS members.
- g. **UGS 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary:** BGS represented by Sarah at the anniversary conference and also at a dinner with past UGS presidents and founder members.
- h. **Spring Farm Walks:** great success once again with over 500 attending over the three days, to be repeated next year.
- i. **Special Interest Horse Group:** addressed the issue of efficient utilization of grass by horses being a neglected topic. A very successful and interesting day.
- j. **Grassland UK and Beef Expo:** well attended seminars organised in conjunction with Dairy Co. Closely followed by BGS's presence on the EBLEX stand at Beef Expo, Malvern.

- k. **Forage Legume Meeting:** held at IBERS combining excellent technical papers and visits to clover and mixed species breeding programmes.
  - l. **The R&D Committee:** congratulated for production of the R&D priorities 2009-2012. The document received excellent feedback from wide circulation.
  - m. **Finances:** society moves into 2009 well able to cope with the current global financial downturn, and is in a position to invest in new projects for long term growth.
  - n. **BGS Grazing Partners:** thanks to the support from EBLEX, Dairy Co., National Trust and BGS supported by VTS funding, eight excellent grassland farmers are ready to share their knowledge with fellow grazers.
  - o. **New Website:** received in excess of 1400 visitors in the first month and feedback to date has been excellent.
  - p. **Nutrient Wise Demonstrations:** plans are going well and Jess will update on progress under item 8.
  - q. **Grass and Forage Science:** continues to flourish, bringing additional income during the year.
  - r. **Grass and Forage Farmer:** continues to improve with the last issue reaching 24 pages featuring a wide range of articles and reports.
  - s. **Membership:** Jess was congratulated on recruiting eight corporate members.
  - t. **BGS Innovation Award:** this year's joint winners announced, John Vipond from SAC and Marcus Maxwell for their development and promotion of forage aspects of Easicare sheep systems.
8. **Ongoing development of the Society:** Society Director, Jessica Buss reports - BGS is a busy organisation. We have a full calendar of events in 2009 which we are involved in different ways, plus a magazine, website and scientific journal, grassland management competition, supporting the Herbage Varieties Guide, etc. This is a lot for an organisation with only two employees and it could not be achieved without the support and time of many volunteers – including council and committee members, and many others. But the Trustees recognise to have a sustainable and long term future we need new activity which will see our network and income grow. Careful consideration sees BGS in three new projects in 2009.

Firstly, a new user-friendly website now running, on which we are receiving good feedback. Second is BGS Grazing Partners which I hope you will have read about in Grass and Forage Farmer, which is being managed by Council member Sara Gregson and we now have eight farmers trained and keen to help other farmers improve their grazing management. Thirdly is BGS Nutrient Wise Demos – which has been longer in the planning and is BGS's biggest investment in its future, because we decide our pilot should be funded solely by BGS. Our pilot site is being managed by Creedy Associates in Devon and will include a number of methods of introducing clover and slurry applications. Our first visitors will be invited to the site through local grassland societies in late September with more planned for March 2010 and a corporate member's day in October. The aim for

future years is that once we know what it costs is to seek funding for further sites.

#### **9. Election of Officers and Members of Council:**

**President Elect** Tony Evans. Nominated by Council. **Proposed** Dave Roberts  
**Seconded** Peter Harrison. Elected uncontested.

In his absence, Dave Roberts read a letter from Tony Evans outlining his commitment to BGS.

**Hon Treasurer** Paul Munson. Nominated by Council. **Proposed** Colin Branston  
**Seconded** Eddie Philips. Elected Uncontested.

**Hon Secretary** Lois Philipps. Nominated by Council. **Proposed** Sara Gregson  
**Seconded** Richard Ratcliffe. Elected uncontested.

The following individual was proposed by council to fill the annual vacancy for a national member:

**National Member** Helen Mathieu. Nominated by Council. **Proposed** Richard Ratcliffe  
**Seconded** John Downes. Elected uncontested

**10. Alternate Regional Representatives:** Council proposed an alternative policy on the terms of office for regional representatives, whereby they serve for one year as Regional Rep Elect, before a two year term on Council as Regional Rep and then one year as Alternate Regional Rep to support the incoming Regional Rep. Current Regional reps will be asked to take on this role at the end of their current term. **Proposed** Harold Stevenson **Seconded** Helen Mathieu. No regional rep nominations are therefore needed at this AGM.

**11.** Handover of office to incoming President, Dr David Roberts.

AGM meeting closed at 8:15pm.