



Minutes of the 63rd Annual General Meeting of the British Grassland Society

Held on 14th July 2008, at Van der Valk Hotel, Schiphol

AGM Chairman: Mr Richard Ratcliffe.

Sufficient numbers were present for a quorum (26).

Apologies: Angus Golightly, Elly Sabiiti, John Slater, Ron Harkess, Lois Philipps, Elaine Jewkes.

Minutes of AGM Meeting held on 9th July 2007: Mr Ratcliffe asked those present to consider approval of the minutes of the 63rd meeting. There were no matters arising from these minutes. All agreed to approve these minutes.

Financial Report: The report of the Trustees was contained within the summary of the financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2007 (available on the website or via the BGS office) and BGS director Jessica Buss presented her financial report to the assembly.

Jessica Buss reported that meetings and conferences had all produced a surplus towards their admin costs and VAT liability. Grass and Forage Farmer broke even and Sara Gregson was credited for her part in the editorial of three magazines. The profit share in Grass and Forage Science increased by £6,000 due to some one off income. The surplus was boosted by the office being understaffed until September 2007, which is unsustainable and has now been addressed with the appointment of a project coordinator. Previous restructuring and accommodation benefited the 2007 accounts. Capital Expenditure was successfully kept to a minimum.

Funds from many commercial companies, EBLEX, DEFRA, Natural England and Stapeldon Memorial Trust, increased in the form of sponsorship and projects for which we are very grateful.

Finally the fall in the stock market saw our investments lose the gains made in the previous year, but funds continue to provide adequate reserves for planned activity.

Tony Evans reported that BGS's income had increased whilst the expenses had substantially decreased, giving a surplus of £48,659. Richard Ratcliffe congratulated Jessica Buss and Tony Evans on the improvement in the financial state of the organisation. Tony Evans reiterated that the current state of the countries economics saw a fall in the society's investments which will incur challenges ahead; however decisions are still to be made as to how the society uses the surplus from 2007.

The approval of accounts was proposed by Peter Harrison and seconded by Nigel Young.

President's Report for 2007-2008: *The full version of this was circulated with the agenda.* Richard Ratcliffe read his extracts of his report to the AGM. He reflected on the substantial improvements to the society in the last two years. He congratulated Director Jessica Buss and the Hon Treasurer for their disciplined approach in conducting the Society's affairs.

Project Coordinator: Rachael was officially welcomed to the society at this her first AGM. She was congratulated on how well she had fitted into the society and her role over the last 10 months.

National Grassland Management Competition: the NGMC was a great success, despite the postponement of judging to late autumn and the award presentation to the Dairy Show in January due to the summer break out of foot and mouth. Richard welcomed Winner of the 2007 NGMC, Arthur Owen, to the meeting.

Climate Change Conference: The disappointing response to the two conferences organised at the beginning of the year resulted in the cancelation. He hoped the society would look at this topic again in the future.

Early Grazing Days: a series of 4 on-farm events organised with RABDF and Dairy Co had attracted over 500 farmers. Each day was a great success with a particular thanks to the host farmers. Similar joint events are being discussed for next year.

Beef and Sheep Tour: The two day tour to Northumberland was another great success with a good number of old and new faces in attendance.

Silage Decisions: The programme designed in conjunction with EBLEX to test farmer's knowledge on silage making and to provide helpful tips was well received.

Grassland and Muck 2008: BGS assisted in the running of the forums which had an extremely popular response, particularly the seminar of the new NVZ rules.

Herbage Varieties Guide: This has proven a much more user friendly version and has been well received. It will hopefully contribute to the continuation of grass variety testing.

Grass and Forage Farmer: Last year Jessica Buss enabled the BGS to move the editorial in house. Jessica has increased advertisement sales and is producing a quality read.

Grass and Forage Science: Plays a vital role with praise to John Milne. GFS was very well received at the International Grassland Congress in China.

R & D committee: This group is successfully providing key consultation reports for the government.

International Grassland Congress, Hohhot: BGS members were grateful to be at this very successful and informative trip.

In conclusion, Richard Ratcliffe thanked the presidential team for their support and said that he was looking forward to the coming year in his role as immediate past president. He thanked council for their commitment to the society. He also thanked Jessica Buss and Rachael Proctor.

Ongoing development of the Society: Jessica Buss explained BGS had some good one off income in 2007, but we would not deliver as big a surplus in 2008. But it would still be close to the long term aim of not spending investment income on our trading activity, excluding what would be invested in new activity.

With all the activity of the past six months, working with many new partners and people on projects such as the Herbage Varieties Guide, EBLEX booklet, a second year of spring farmwalks, Climate Change meetings, the Beef and Sheep Tour, Grassland UK seminars, our first Summer Meeting outside the UK and Eire, the Cattle Research Strategy Meeting and the IGC in China has resulted in increased profile.

But Jessica Buss still had a target to see BGS achieve both a higher turnover and more activity so it becomes a thriving organisation. Council have continued to discuss a plan for demonstrations that will allow farmers to see how research can be applied successfully. She reported that with the changes in the levy bodies, funding maybe more difficult to acquire. It may be possible to use some of 2007's surplus to fund our own first site where we can test and hopefully prove what can be achieved with the view that funding may come available in the future. BGS would like to start being seen as a serious player in knowledge transfer.

For 2009 BGS hopes to look at a research conference and the possible planning of another occasional synopsis. We will once again be collaborating with RABDF on spring farm walks and are starting to look into the development of a new website.

In autumn 2009, all the levy body staff will relocate to Stoneleigh in Warwickshire, so the current BGS office will no longer be available to us. The Trustees have agreed the best option for BGS will be to seek accommodation in Warwickshire, from September 2009, close to levy companies, NFU and many other organisations nearby.

Election of Officers and Members of Council:

President Sarah Byford **Proposed** George Fisher **Seconded** Sara Gregson
President Elect Dave Roberts. Nominated by Council. **Proposed** Sarah Byford
Seconded Nigel Young. Elected uncontested.

Dave Roberts gives thanks for his new position.

Hon Treasurer Tony Evans. Nominated by Council. **Proposed** George Fisher
Seconded Tim Mayo. Elected Uncontested.

Hon Secretary Lois Philipps. Nominated by Council. **Proposed** Sara Gregson
Seconded Robert Evans. Elected uncontested.

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

National Member Athole Marshall. Nominated by council. **Proposed** Helen Mathieu
Seconded Nigel Young. Elected uncontested

Alternate Regional Representatives - non-trustee positions:

Northern: Paul Robinson **Proposed** Tom Rawson **Seconded** John Plummer
Elected uncontested

Central: Ian Smith **Proposed** Tom Rawson **Seconded** Nigel Young
Elected uncontested

South West: Tony Walkers **Proposed** Richard Simpson **Seconded** Stephen
Bendall. Elected uncontested.

Wales: **No nomination received.** Agreed that council could fill this vacancy.

Any other business: None

The meeting closed.