

## LONDON NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

The **Annual General Meeting** of the Society was held at 18.30 on Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> December 2022 by Zoom Video and Teleconference. There were 91 attendees - 73 LNHS members and 18 non-members.

### Present:

President, Maria Roberts, Secretary, Annie Wilson, Treasurer, Mike West, Minutes Secretary, Angela Linnell.

Voting was conducted by online polls, only LNHS members being allowed to vote. Due to the operation of Zoom polls, the four people designated as hosts (Maria Roberts, Anke Marsh, Annie Wilson and Keiron Brown) declared their votes in advance. The results of all votes are summarised on page 6.

**1 Apologies for absence** had been received from Eric Clement, Tony Duckett. Clive Herbert, Tony Madgwick and Gehan and Nirma de Silva Wijeyeratne.

### 2 To confirm the Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on December 9<sup>th</sup> 2021

The Minutes were proposed by Liz Andrew, seconded by Mike Wilsdon and approved *nem con*. Maria thanked Annie Wilson for volunteering to become Secretary of the LNHS.

### 3 Annual Report and Statement of Accounts for the period 1st July 2021 to 30th June 2022

## SUMMARISED ACCOUNTS

Mike West - Treasurer

	2021/2022	2020/2021
<b>ASSETS at year end</b>		
Bank & cash	27,729	20,269
Investments	314,491	352,715
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>342,220</b>	<b>372,984</b>
<b>RECEIPTS</b>		
Subscriptions	18,919	17,826
Donations	1,068	1,027
Grants	5,562	-
Gift Aid	3,552	2,849
Investment income	7,920	9,390
Investment sales	7,500	-
Other	871	762
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>45,392</b>	<b>31,854</b>
<b>PAYMENTS</b>		
The London Naturalist	4,920	4,389
London Bird Report	5,567	4,522
Newsletter	3,101	3,427
Mailing	7,108	7,509
Library	1,608	1,632
Services	4,207	4,029

Investment purchases	7,500	-
Other	3,921	3,148
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>37,932</b>	<b>28,656</b>

**Surplus in year**                      **7,460**                      3,198

The Treasurer, Mike West, reported that the value of LNHS investments had fallen by 10%, but this was in line with the pattern of UK investments. However, there had been an increase in membership, probably due to our virtual talks, so subscription income had increased. A grant of £5,562 was received from the City of London Corporation for the survey of flora on Hampstead Heath. As investment income had fallen, we might have to consider raising subscriptions next year. We moved £7,500 of investments from one fund to another which is why this amount appears twice in the accounts.

The costs of producing *The London Naturalist* and the *London Bird Report (LBR)* had increased, mainly due to the extra members requiring more copies. We are grateful to Mike Trier for initiatives to increase availability and to promote the *LBR* at no additional cost to the Society. Newsletter costs appeared lower than the previous year but this was because the printer's invoice for the fourth issue was not received until after the year end – and will therefore be included in next year's accounts. At the end of the year there was a surplus of £7,460 compared with £3,198 in 2021. The accounts were proposed by Mike West and seconded by Annie Wilson.

Maria Roberts thanked Mike for all his hard work as Treasurer over many years.

**4 To elect Officers and other members (other than Section representatives) to serve on Council for 2023**

Role	Nominee(s)
President	No nominations received
Treasurer	Mike West
Secretary	Annie Wilson
<b>Members other than Section representatives. (Ten may be elected.)</b>	Jan Hewlett (2020-2024) Ian Woodward (2020 - 2024) Robin Blades (2022 - 2026) Wendy Knight (2022 - 2026) David Bevan (2022 - 2026) Joanne Maddox Peter Mantle

**Vote to elect the Secretary** Annie Wilson was elected as Secretary *nem con*.

**Vote to elect the nominee for Treasurer [Single Choice]** Mike West was seeking re-election as Treasurer and was re-elected *nem con*.

**Vote to approve the election of the representatives to Council [Single Choice]** The representative for the Ecology and Entomology group was Anke Marsh, for Botany Maureen Parry, for the London Bird Club Liz Andrew, for the Hampstead Heath Survey Kat Duke.

**To elect the nominated Independent Examiner [Single Choice]** Our independent Examiner was Ralph Sears. He had worked for Meyer Williams accountants in Hertford for many years but the firm had merged with another and was now called Hentons. Mike West said he and Ralph Sears had always worked well together and proposed his re-election. Michael Wilsdon seconded it and Ralph Sears was re-elected *nem con*.

**Vote to re-elect the nominees for ordinary members of Council.** In addition, there are up to 10 trustees representing the members at large. The current members were Jan Hewlett (2020 - 2024) Ian Woodward (2020 - 2024) Robin Blades (2022 - 2026) Wendy Knight (2022 - 2026) David Bevan (2022 - 2026) who were all nominated again. Two new trustees, Pete Mantle and Jo Maddox, were also nominated. The nominees were proposed *en bloc* by Maria Roberts and seconded by Keiron Brown. Each was listed separately in the poll and all were duly elected. There were still three vacancies and Maria said new volunteers were very welcome.

A question was asked from the audience as to whether the President is voted for. Maria explained that her two-year term of office had come to an end. No nominations for President had been submitted before the closing date. Nominations could be made before the next closing date by any member of the Society.

### **5 Proposed changes to LNHS rules**

Robin Blades explained the proposed changes to the rules by which the LNHS is governed. He said that in 2017 changes were proposed to the LNHS rules to bring them into line with Charity Commission guidance and these were approved at the Society's AGM. A charity can make changes to its administrative provisions without the approval of the Commission so most of the changes were properly made.

Unfortunately, the need to obtain Charity Commission approval before changing certain rules was overlooked and those changes were not properly made. The rules concerned are those for benefits to trustees, the procedures for dissolving the Society and those for amending the rules. Since 2017 the Society has not done anything on the basis of those rules which were not successfully changed in 2017. There have been no financial transactions with trustees other than reimbursement of expenses which was permitted under the previous (2005) rules, the Society has obviously not been dissolved and no amendments of the rules have been proposed until this meeting.

The proposed amendments to the rules have to be made under the amendment rule in the 2005 rules and they were notified to members by a notice sent out with the August 2022 Newsletter and have subsequently been made available on the website. No comments have been received from members. The current proposals reintroduce the rules on application of the income and property of the Society, benefits and payments to trustees and connected persons, dissolution of the Society and amendment of the rules as proposed in 2017. These have now been approved by the Charity Commission. In addition, a change is proposed to confirm that general meetings of the Society and meetings of trustees may be held in person, online, by telephone or on a hybrid basis. The existing rules do not say that these meetings have to be held in person and the Commission has confirmed that virtual meetings are therefore permitted already but advised that for the avoidance of doubt the appropriate provisions should be added to our rules.

There were no questions or comments about this.

Five votes were taken:

1. To insert the rules on the application of income and property and benefits and payments to trustees.
2. To replace the existing rule on dissolution.
3. To replace the existing rule on amendment of the rules.
4. To amend the rule about annual and special general meeting.
5. To amend the rule about meetings of the trustees.

Maria thanked Robin Blades for all his assistance in sorting this issue out and also thanked the members for approving all the changes.

The amendments would now be added to the LNHS rules.

## **6 Honorary Vice Presidents**

Michael Wilsdon explained that Council had decided that this year it would like to recognise the great contributions made by two individuals to the LNHS, Helen Baker and John Swindells, by inviting them to become Honorary Vice Presidents. Both individuals have assisted the Society over many years in several roles and offered much wise advice.

Michael Wilsdon said that Helen Baker was particularly well regarded for her research into the decline of the House Sparrow in London. When Helen was working in London, she joined the LNHS in 1976 and was particularly keen on supporting the Ornithology Section, of which she was Chair from 1993 to 1996. Her local site was Stockers Lake but as it was very well watched and recorded, she turned her attention to The Aquadrome at Rickmansworth (Bury and Batchworth Lakes plus surrounding area), the Grand Union Canal, the Chess Valley and, less frequently, Chorleywood Common. Her paper "Gains and Losses in Forty Years Round Rickmansworth" in the LBR for 2020 gives more information about the areas covered and the species seen.

Helen is perhaps most well known in the Society for her work on House Sparrows organising the LNHS House Sparrow Monitoring Project when the decline in London sparrows was becoming obvious but before the Breeding Bird Survey provided data on trends in London. Helen was then Secretary to the LNHS Ornithological Research Committee. After her retirement, Helen was LNHS President from December 2013 to December 2015 during which time she spearheaded the major revision and update to the Society's rules to ensure they aligned with current Charity Commission guidelines. Helen was also Chair of the British Ornithologists Club for the four-year term from May 2009 to May 2015.

Michael said that John Swindells had contributed to the records for St James's Park (as had Helen). He joined the Society in 1967 and attended his first field meeting – to Colley Hill led by the indomitable Eleanor Isherwood – in June 1968. However, his serious involvement with the society did not really begin until the 1990s. He was persuaded to join the Botany Committee in 1997 and soon was leading field meetings; his first one in 1998 and his 52<sup>nd</sup> in 2022. Perhaps most notable has been the series of 'Pot Luck in the East End' meetings held annually since 2005 (apart from in the Covid years) when exploring the flowering plants and ferns of various parts of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. Another memorable one was the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary walk in 2008 which started at London Fields and walked to the City passing the sites of the first two meeting places of the Haggerstone Entomological Society, the older of the two precursor societies of the LNHS. Along with George Hounsome, John has also hosted a Botany Quiz nearly every year since 2007. It was no surprise that John was invited to become LNHS President and he held the position for three years. Very properly, his two Presidential addresses were London based and he has published other papers on the botany of the London area.

Michael was pleased to announce that Council had appointed both Helen and John as Honorary Vice Presidents. In response, John Swindells explained that he thought the LNHS was a very worthwhile organisation to volunteer for. Helen Baker, now living in Exeter, *shared/said?* that she hoped to have a paper on House Sparrows published in the *London Bird Report*.

## **7 Reports from the LNHS Sections**

### **Library**

Julie Berk listed the opening times for the LNHS Library and said she had 25 visitors during the year including one who had looked for information on flora on bomb sites, and others researching spiders and birds. Maria had held two identification sessions – one on moths and one on hoverflies there and mentioned some key texts on these groups that were in the Library. An attendee commented on the warm welcome received and that the Library was an amazing resource for LNHS members. Julie said it was best to let her know if you intended to visit and it might be possible to arrange visits outside the usual opening times if arranged in advance.

#### **Virtual Talks**

Maria said there had been twenty virtual talks over the last year with over 3,600 attendees and an average of 194 viewers. The recordings were now also available on YouTube and there had been 18,000 video views of them. We had nearly 3,000 followers on Eventbrite, which is excellent. Talks were available to both members and non-members as part of our educational role.

#### **Ecology and Entomology Section**

Keiron Brown, the Chair, said that this section covers all but birds and botany. There had been 439 new records of earthworms in the LNHS recording area and 23 out of 29 British species had been found with the Kingston area being especially fruitful. Edward Milner had reported the finding of 132 species of spider in 2022. Tom Langton paid a tribute to John Burton, an expert on amphibians, who had died in 2022 and who was praised by Sir David Attenborough at the memorial service. There were fewer butterfly records than usual, probably due to the very hot summer. Work on the London Butterfly Atlas is proceeding well. A single Scarce Blue-Tailed Damselfly had been found in Hillingdon - a first for the London area. Tony Madgwick reported on bees and wasps and said that the wasp *Lestica clypeata* was discovered this year in the grounds of Chiswick House. It was the first found in London since 1853. Neil Anderson had reported a good year for dragonflies. Keiron thanked all the recorders and those who sent in their records.

#### **Botany Section**

George Hounsome said that David Bevan had stepped down as Chair after sterling service for many years and he had now taken over. The Secretary was now Andrew Planet and the Field Meetings Organiser was John Agar. There was a vacancy for an Indoor Meetings Secretary and a Library representative. The section had held 26 field meetings with an average attendance of 14.

#### **Hampstead Heath Survey**

Liz Andrew said 15 walks had taken place between June 2021 and June 2022 with an average attendance of 12. The survey covered many taxonomic groups including fungi, bees, dragonflies, jumping spiders, ants and bryophytes. The Millennial Flora Project received a significant grant to review the Heath's flora. The previous survey had recorded 650 species of flowering plants and ferns and took place between 1997 to 2003. Recording will also cover the phenology of leaves and flowers.

#### **Bookham Common Survey**

Maria Roberts said that regular visits had now been resumed, after the enforced absence because of Covid. The participants were mainly local and the numbers limited. It needs some regular LNHS volunteers to dedicate themselves to the survey and re-establish regular recording. The National Trust ranger, Ian Swinney, plays an active role in the management of the site and led a successful walk for the LNHS last year. He will be retiring soon and his replacement is keen to continue his work and to liaise with the LNHS. The records of beetles on the Common have still not been published so this project needs to be revisited if possible.

#### **London Bird Club**

Cecilia Derrick is now Secretary and reported that the LBC publicises its meetings to other bird clubs, including the Marylebone Bird Club, the RSPB and the Central London RSPB Local Group and we publicise their meetings in return. The outdoor walks recommenced in September 2021 and have an average attendance of 9 and an average of 40 bird species seen. It is expected that the *London Bird*

*Report* for 2021 will be published in May 2023. There have been no further problems with its packaging. There is a vacancy for the Chair of the LBR editorial board and a need for more writers.

Maria Roberts thanked everyone involved in the sections and the London Bird Report and also Clive Herbert for his work on the *London Naturalist* and Mark Burgess for his work on the *Newsletter*.

### **8 Any Other Business**

Annie Wilson said that there will be a book sale on Friday March 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> and the proceeds will go jointly to the charity, Heath Hands, who are hosting the sale and to the LNHS.

Michael Wilsdon thanked Maria for her enthusiastic and invigorating work as President.

The AGM closed at 7.40pm.

**The AGM was followed by a virtual talk on Zoom by David Wilkinson on *Ecology and natural history*.**

### **Poll results for the AGM**

#### **Poll 1 Attendance**

49 + 1 ordinary members, 6 + 3 trustees, plus visitors

Quorum is 25. The numbers in attendance ensured that ordinary members could outvote trustees.

#### **Poll 2 Approve the Minutes of the Annual General Meeting 9th December 2021**

61 + 4 for, 2 abstentions

#### **Poll 3 Adopt the Annual Report of the Society for the period 1st July 2021 to 30th June 2022**

64 + 4 for, no abstentions

#### **Poll 4 Adopt the Statement of Financial Activities of the Society for the period 1st July 2021 to 30th June 2022**

65 + 4 for, 1 abstention

#### **Poll 5 Annie Wilson as Secretary, Mike West as Treasurer**

67 + 4 for, no abstentions

Same numbers for both

#### **Poll 6**

Liz Andrew 70 + 4 for, no abstentions

Maureen Parry 70 + 4 for, no abstentions

Anke Marsh 69 + 4 for, 1 abstention

Kat Duke 70 + 4 for, no abstentions

#### **Poll 7**

Jan Hewlett 66 + 4 for, 1 abstention

Ian Woodward 67 + 4 for, no abstentions

Robin Blades 67 + 4 for, no abstentions

Wendy Knight 67 + 4 for, no abstentions

David Bevan 67 + 4 for, no abstentions

Jo Maddox 67 + 4 for, no abstentions

Peter Mantle 67 + 4 for, no abstentions

#### **Poll 8 Appointment of Ralph Sears**

70 + 4 for, 3 abstentions

#### **Poll 9 Amendments to rules**

For each of the five rule changes, the votes were :

66 + 4 in favour and 2 abstentions.