

The Hardy Plant Society
60th Annual General Meeting of members of the Society
Held on Saturday 25th March 2017
At Easton & Otley College, Bawburgh Rd., Easton, Norwich, NR9 5DX

MINUTES

Officers present: Cathy Rollinson (Chairman), Ruth Plant (Vice Chairman), Derek Cooper (Hon. Sec.), Stuart Senior (Hon. Treasurer).

Apologies for absence were read out by the Chairman.

The Chairman opened the meeting by welcoming members and thanking the Norfolk & Suffolk Group, and especially the organising committee for their work in combining the AGM within the practical arrangements for the Society's Annual Lecture Day. Cathy reminded those present that voting at the AGM was for members only.

1. **The minutes of the AGM of 2016** as approved by the Chairman and printed in the Newsletter of July 2016 were approved as a correct record; proposed by Chris Davies, seconded by Lois Scott.
2. There were no **matters arising** from the minutes.
3. **Chairman's Report.**

The Chairman's Annual Report for 2016 was published in the February 2017 edition of the Newsletter; Cathy wished to bring several issues into a sharper focus and these are reported here in summary form. Cathy reminded members that the measure of our success was the delivery of our charity objects and that these are all plant and horticulture based. She drew attention to additional features of the Seed Distribution (which now has an international component) and to the work of the Conservation Scheme. Cathy told members of the enthusiasm of those working in the Conservation area but reminded members that we need more people directly involved. This is also true of other areas of activity; participation of volunteers is vital to the continuation of our success. Cathy moved on to remind members of the support which is available to members and Post Holders from Sally and Clare in the HPS office. Naturally communication in one form or another is an important feature of delivery and we are pleased to report on the positive feedback related to our re-launched website and on progress with Facebook and Twitter. Cathy told members about the agreement we have for 'Ambassadors' for the HPS, namely Matt Biggs, Matthew Wilson, Val Bourne and Carol Klein; all very welcome by our members, and additionally to mark our anniversary we have an 'HPS Open Garden' scheme with over 60 gardens covering many regions of the country. Cathy concluded her additional points by reading out a letter from our President, Roy Lancaster who unfortunately was not able to be with us at the AGM. Roy's address drew attention to the conservation aspects of the work of the HPS, but stressed also the importance of the social element and the clear contribution that gardening and membership of the HPS can have to well-being.

Cathy's Report was approved and Roy's Report was endorsed *nemo con.*

4. **Treasurer's Report**

Stuart gave his Report and spoke to the documentation which had been circulated previously. This Report broke new ground by including all of the data necessitated by our obligation to make financial statements to the Charity Commissioners. It summarises the Society's objects and the activities which are carried out to realise them in practice. The conventional income & expenditure account and also the balance sheet at year-end were included, along with explanatory notes and the Report of the Independent Examiner. In speaking to his report Stuart emphasised two particular aspects, namely i) the importance for the Society of maintaining a clear focus upon the delivery of the Society's charity objects and ii) the need for vigilance over asset levels in relation to annual turnover. [*Secretary's note: in the past the Charity Commissioners have regarded asset levels of about three times annual turnover as generally appropriate.*] Henry Woolstone spoke for many members when he commended the Treasurer on this extended but clear approach for reporting finance data to the AGM. There was a question from the floor about the increase in expenditure on Publicity during 2016. Cathy and Stuart explained that this was due to the engagement of a temporary Publicity Officer (in the absence of voluntary help) and that this was not intended as an annual event. Members were reminded that the benefits of publicity activity are not necessarily apparent in the year in which expenditure is incurred and that in any case such benefits are not easily quantified. Stuart then spoke briefly to a separate paper which was circulated at the meeting and which set out the budget for 2017.

Acceptance of the Treasurer's report and approval of the budget was proposed by Lynne Hackett and seconded by Henry Woolstone, **approved by the AGM *nemo diss.***

5. **Election of the Chairman.** Cathy Rollinson was proposed by Pam Tatam and seconded by Lynne Hackett and elected unanimously to serve for a third year.
6. **Election of the Officers of the Society.**
 - i) Standing for election as **Hon. Treasurer** of the Society, Stuart Senior was proposed by Roy Stickland and seconded by Lady Ro Fitzgerald, Stuart was elected unanimously;
 - ii) Standing for election as **Hon Secretary** of the Society, Judi Deakin was proposed by Derek Cooper and seconded by Yvonne Moorcroft, Judi was elected unanimously.
 - iii) **A note about the office of Vice-Chairman.** The closing date for nominations for both Trustees and Officers is the 31st December and at that date there were no nominations for the office of Vice-Chairman. Since then a name had come forward and Trustees adopted the following procedure which is permitted in our constitution. Linda Crowther was *co-opted* as a Trustee at their February meeting and Trustees propose to use their *powers of appointment* to appoint Linda to the vacant office of Vice-Chairman at their meeting in June. Members present were asked to show their support for this, **agreed *nemo dis.*** [*Secretary's note, the conventional brief biographical note was lodged with the Trustees in February.*]
7. **Election of Trustees for the period 2017 to 2021**
 - i) Christine Price-Morris (Clwyd Group), proposed by Derek Cooper and seconded by Susan Morris, and
 - ii) Anna Peacock (Lincolnshire Group), proposed by Cathy Rollinson and seconded by Helen Boothman, were both elected unanimously.
8. **Votes of Thanks**

Cathy spoke briefly about the tremendous amount of work which was put into the delivery of the Society's objects on an entirely voluntary basis, "apart from the office staff we are all volunteers", and she pointed out that this takes place at all sorts of level within the Society. Cathy went on to say how important it was to recognise contributions when colleagues were standing down at the end of their term as Trustees or as Post holders. A Vote of Thanks was **proposed and agreed** for the following:

Trustees standing down: Sue Jackman, Roy Strickland and Trevor Holmes,
Post holders leaving office: Judy Harry (Horticultural Advisor), Tony Bays (Cornucopia Editor), John McGhee (Treasurer), Derek Cooper (Hon Sec).

Cathy also wished to record her personal thanks as well as those of the Society as a whole to Chris Davies and the organising committee of the Norfolk and Suffolk Group for the organisation and delivery of the combined ALD/AGM.
9. **Appointment of the Independent Examiner of the Society's accounts.**

Mr James Howard of Haynes Watts was proposed by Stuart Senior and Seconded by Keith Scott. A member from the floor queried the probity of this proposal for the auditor of the Society's accounts being made by the Treasurer. Hon Secretary explained that the Charity Commissioners had clear guidelines about the treatment of accounts and that there are two thresholds relating to the puissance of examination as the size of organisations increases. The turnover of the HPS is such that full audit by members of the professional audit bodies is not required; we fall into the lowest category of independent examination and our processes are compliant with C.C. advice.

The appointment was approved.
10. **Approval of a recommendation** from Trustees for the addition of powers regarding **discounted membership** subscriptions.

The proposal is as follows; "The Hardy Plant Society seeks to introduce a discounted membership scheme for students and trainees who will be the horticulturalists of the future. The scheme is primarily intended for students of horticulture, but it is also open to other students and trainees who wish to join the HPS. Mature students, including those making a change of career direction are also eligible for the scheme. The scheme is available to students on accredited courses who are joining HPS for the first time."

Adoption was proposed by Judi Deakin and seconded by Tricia Fraser and carried *nemo con.*

This concluded the formal business of the Annual General Meeting; the meeting was followed by an Open Forum discussion.

OPEN FORUM ITEMS (*these are taken as advisory issues for further consideration by Officers and/or Trustees as appropriate*)

- i) Members raised the question of expansion of the scheme for discounted membership subscriptions (for example to schools and FE colleges).
- ii) Members exchanged views about the focus on membership issues at public events such as shows. Members wished to see some linkage which could impact upon recruitment, but members were also made aware that recruitment aspirations cannot be the first reason for supporting shows. There was also an awareness that the type of recruitment material/publicity would differ depending on the nature and prestige of the show, and on the need to remain compliant with the requirements of the organisers of the shows.

Derek Cooper (Hon Secretary) March 2017