|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Minutes of the Annual Meeting and Social Evening**  **Thursday 26 January 2023, 6.30pm**  **Great North Museum: Hancock** |  |

There were 101 members in attendance.

1. **Welcome by Chair, Gordon Port**

NHSN Chair, Gordon Port (GP) welcomed everybody to the meeting, especially significant as this is our first face to face annual meeting since the pandemic. GP confirmed that the meeting would be filmed for NHSN YouTube channel. GP introduced the formal business of the meeting, which would then be followed by presentations.

1. **Consideration of the financial statements and annual report for the period 1st August 2021- 31st July 2022**

GP reminded members that a summary of the financial statements was included in the Annual Review recently sent to members and the full financial statements and annual report had been made available on the NHSN website and on request from the NHSN office. GP summarised the Chair’s review as set out in the Annual Report.

Brian Kram, Hon Treasurer (BK) outlined the financial statements and summarised accounts as set out on the NHSN website.

During the year, subscription income (including Gift Aid) increased from £81,836 to £92,647. Investment income showed a decrease to £16,287 from £17,412 the previous year. This reflected the market performance throughout the year.

Our investments decreased in value, ending the year with a valuation of £633,511 compared to £696,458 as at 31st July 2021.

Total expenditure exceeded that of the previous year, as per budget.

The main reasons were running costs for the GNR Field Studies Room and new depreciation on the capitalised costs of the GNR Field Studies Room plus the GNR boundary fencing.

Consequently, the operating deficit for 2021/22 was (£49,594) compared to a deficit in 2020/21 of (£39,354)

Capital Expenditure on Fixed Assets totalled £64,717. Included in this figure was £52,588 for metal boundary fencing at GNR, £5,463 for additions to the Field Station Room.

Cash at bank and in hand rose from £47,501 to £90,056.

The Share Portfolio was impacted by an unrealised loss of £44,469. As a result of this and the trading deficit, total funds carried forward at the end of the year decreased from £1,064,164 to £970,101*.*

The approval of the financial statements and annual report was proposed by GP and seconded by Annie Tindley (AT). The financial statements and annual report were unanimously approved.

GP thanked BK for all his help and time with financial work.

1. **Elections**

GP outlined that members of Council, the trustees of NHSN, normally serve three years before then being entitled to stand for re-election. This year six trustees in total had resigned or were standing down, four of whom were standing for re-election.

Jonathan Hewitt and Cain Scrimgeour were standing down. Both had been and continue to be great supporters of NHSN. Jonathan had been a trustee for many years and for five years served as Chair of the Board of Trustees. We owe them both an enormous debt of gratitude for their service in their many different ways on Council. Our thanks to them both was formally recorded.

The following four trustees were standing for re-election: Gordon Port, Melanie Reed, Annie Tindley and Rinke Vinkenoog

GP proposed the re-election in turn of each of Melanie Reed, Annie Tindley and Rinke Vinkenoog. BK seconded.

The meeting unanimously approved.

GP handed over chairing of the meeting to BK. BK proposed the re-election of Gordon Port as a trustee, AT seconded and Gordon’s reappointment was unanimously approved.

1. **Election of Independent Examiners. Tait Walker (Azets)**

GP proposed that Tait Walker (Azets) to be re-elected as Independent Financial Examiners and BK seconded.

The meeting unanimously approved

1. **Celebrating achievements of 2022 and a look ahead to 2023**

Clare Freeman, Director, reiterated GP’s thanks to the staff and volunteer teams who have overcome the significant challenges that NHSN has faced over the last year with an exceptional amount of positive work achieved.

Clare outlined some key achievements from 2022, including the opening of the Field Studies Room, the success of the 1829 and NHSN talks, engagement on social media and continued efforts to engage with more and a wider range of people.

Annie Tindley, Vice-Chair outlined collaborations and partnerships with organisations throughout the NE

Jenny Snell, GNR Volunteer gave an update of GNR wildlife sightings.

Des Matheson, GNR Volunteer update of regular (Wednesday and Saturday) volunteering at GNR, installing ramp, direction posts, fixing the hides

James Common, Senior Naturalist: citizen science project updates.

Ho-Yin Wong, Volunteer: Ladybird Spot and Discovering Orchids, progress and successes

Alex Moore, Student Naturalist: NHSN engagement with young people, Plan A, student award scheme

Julie Ross, Nature Ranger: Young North East Naturalist project and engagement with children in schools across NE

Clare introduced plans for NHSN for 2023, introducing Kate Guariento, Project Archivist, delivering the National Heritage Lottery Fund ‘Nature’s Cure in Time of Need: New Voices for NE Nature’ project. Clare finished by outlining further plans for 2023, including development of citizen science projects to widen engagement, further work at GNR and new partnerships. Clare thanked members again for all their support, looking forward to another exciting year ahead thanks to such an impressive collective effort.

1. **Questions and Matters from Members**

Question regarding replacing the two outgoing Trustees. GP answered that NHSN is looking for a wide range of talents / specialisms / skills on Trustee board, and that they have some people in mind. CF further answered that NHSN is following Charity Commission guidance on election of Trustees, ensuring the skills of trustees meets the organisation’s needs.

Question regarding the removal of the proposal by Persimmon Homes to build 150 homes opposite GNR. CF answered that there were 5,000 objections to the proposal. CF emphasised that the momentum of community effort needs to be maintained to oppose any further proposals which would be detrimental to Gosforth Nature Reserve.

1. **Close of meeting**

GP thanked participants, members, volunteers and staff for all their support. We are keen to inspire more and a wider range of people - please do take a goodie bag on your way out and pass to a friend / colleague/ neighbour/ family member.

The recording of the AGM is available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pV2yNt8L5qM>