

BCSS BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING

11:00am, 1st February 2020

Holiday Inn, Newport Pagnell, MK16 OJA

Present: Ian Thwaites (ITH) – Chairman
John Arnold (JAR) – Legal Advisor
Graham Charles (GCH) – Bradleya Editor
Graham Evans (GEV) – Trustee/Minutes
Jim Gibbs (JGI) – Vice Chairman
Eddy Harris (EHA) – Secretary
Bill Hildyard (BHI) – Website Manager
David Kirkbright (DKI) – Treasurer *[morning session only]*
Suzanne Mace (SMA) –Trustee
Tony Mace (TMA) – Publications Manager
Simon Snowden (SSN) – Future Membership Secretary
Alice Vanden Bon (AVB) – Technical Editor
Vanessa Ridge – BCSS Member *[present to offer advice on promotion]*

1. Apologies for absence

1.1 Stirling Baker (SBA) – Trustee
Al Laius (ALA) – CactusWorld Editor
Tony Morris (TMO) – Membership Secretary
Barry Tibbetts (BTI) – Shows Committee Representative

2. Minutes of last meeting

2.1 Amendments were needed as follows:

- 19/52a: the date after which Mexican plants may be considered illegal should be 1997 (not 1992)
- 19/52g: 'Charter Institute of Horticulture' should read 'Chartered Institute of Horticulture'

2.2 The corrected minutes were agreed and signed by ITH.

2.3 ITH thanked EHA, who was retiring from Trusteeship, for his support, hard work and diligence as BCSS Secretary over very many years and for minuting the BoT meetings. GEV would replace EHA as BCSS Secretary.

3. Matters arising from the minutes

3.1 There has been no response from the Chartered Institute of Horticulture. JAR has reminded them by email (19/56g). *Subsequent to the meeting, JAR has received a reply and the BCSS has been added to their website list.*

3.2 The number of potential late renewals was unknown and this made it difficult to determine the quantity of membership cards to be printed (19/57).

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3.3 The BCSS' rules do not require any Trustee or official to be a member of the Society, although compliance with the Charity Commission made this necessary for the Treasurer (19/55). **AP 20/1: JAR to revise BCSS rules to clarify membership requirement for all officials and Trustee requirement for the Treasurer.**

3.4 Although an interim solution had been proposed for the Treasurer's role, a current 'job description' and 'skills specification' for the position did not exist. **AP 20/2: DKI to compile a job description and skills specification for the BCSS Treasurer.**

4. Action updates from December minutes

4.1 SMA reported that the cost of commemorative paperweights for the Gordon Rowley Lifetime Achievement Award was more in the region of £500 per item rather than the budgeted £250 and proposed a donation of £250 to a charity of the award recipient's choice instead. **Decision:** an alternative commemorative gift, possibly engraved crystal or glassware, would be awarded. **AP 20/3: ITH to research engraved crystal/glassware providers and costs.**

4.2 ITH reported that the Chilean Copiapoa project proposed by Chester Zoo was progressing and he had put them in touch with a number of BCSS experts in the field, including Roger Ferryman who was keen to see effective outcomes. **Decision:** it was agreed to fund Roger's travel and accommodation.

4.3 Following BoT concerns ITH had contacted and received a reply from the Chinese society outlining their position in respect of conservation and other matters. This, together with some personal testimonies, eg from German society officials, allayed most of the fears. **Decision:** the BCSS would agree to closer working with the Chinese society, potentially including joint funding of conservation projects, recommendations for UK speakers, licensing publications and sharing articles for translation subject to authors' agreement. **AP 20/5: ITH to contact the Chinese society and ask ALA to handle author liaison.**

4.4 ITH expressed serious concern at the lack of responses from many Trustees to important emails.

4.5 There were serious issues with the Society's archiving arrangements and email retention that could, in a worst case scenario, have legal implications. There was a duty (Statute Limitations) to retain documentation, especially in relation to processes and decisions affecting significant expenditure, for seven years. **Decision:** a formal electronic archive would be set up to store all material. This would include archives for BoT, Shows Committee, Research and Conservation Committees, Trustees, Ancillary Officers and all officials. **AP: 20/6: BHI and TMA to research solutions/costs and then set up a comprehensive BCSS electronic archive. AP: 20/7: All to provide archiving needs to BHI and TMA.**

5. Updates/points from Reports of Officers

5.1 The Officer's Reports are attached at Appendix 1.

5.2 Treasurer

- following the withdrawal of Rick Gillman as Treasurer Elect it had been proposed as an interim solution (12-month contract) that Paul Thompson might fulfil many of the Treasurer's administrative functions, including providing full written reports to BoT, on a paid basis approximately £3500 per year, without becoming a Trustee or BCSS Treasurer **Decision:** agreed (Paul would be responsible

for invoicing BCSS and for his own tax arrangements) ***AP 20/8: JAR to draft agreement with Paul Thompson (with input from DKI)***

- a Trustee would be required to act as Treasurer during this interim arrangement and ITH proposed (seconded by GCH) to do this until September only, by which time a permanent solution would need to be found or another Trustee would need to take on the role **Decision: agreed** ***AP 20/9: DKI to draft an advert for CactusWorld, eNews and social media to recruit a new BCSS Treasurer. AP 20/10: BHI to post advert on social media***
- another possible solution was to recruit a volunteer Trustee from the finance industry to become Treasurer, as aspirational people often found this advantageous on their CVs ***AP 20/11: ITH to liaise with Hazel Taylor about volunteer Trustees from the finance industry***
- DKI has sent copies of his Excel workbooks to Paul Thompson, who confirmed the package was acceptable
- the BCSS bank accounts would need revised signatories **Decision: the Trustees agreed to continue operating bank accounts with HSBC, Lloyd's, Barclay's, PayPal and COIF. Signatories would need to be amended and the following should be added: Mr Graham Evans, Mr James Gibbs, Mr Paul Thompson and Mr Ian Thwaites. Mr Eddy Harris, who is retiring, should be removed from the signatories. Mr John Arnold and Mr David Kirkbright would remain**

5.3 Social media

- Kelly Doak would be resigning as social media poster in a month's time ***AP 20/12: GEV to draft eNews advert for a social media poster***
- Jim Mercer would be building up an online gallery of images to be made available to *CactusWorld*, *eNews*, social media posters and BCSS branches (cost £50 per year to Zenfolio for storage)

5.4 Robins

- as there were no Robins currently active and little prospect of any being revived GEV proposed terminating them **Decision: agreed** ***AP 20/13: GEV to write to Mike Thewles confirming termination of the Robins and thanking him for his contribution***

5.5 eNews

- GEV would be resigning as *eNews* Editor no later than the April edition to take up the BCSS Secretary role and Sheila Cude would be stepping down as Layout Editor at the same time (adverts for a replacement editor were being run in *eNews*) ***AP 20/14: ITH to contact Ralph Martin about editing eNews. AP20/15: SSN to contact Cheryl Sanderson about editing eNews***

5.6 Conservation Committee

- Discussion had led to an improved proposal from Chester Zoo in respect of its Chilean Copiapoa project and BCSS agreement to fund Roger Ferryman's travel and accommodation
- It was important that the project had tangible outcomes **Decision: the project must work with the Chilean authorities** ***AP20/16: GCH and ITH to join Roger Ferryman at the planning meeting with Chester Zoo***

5.7 Research Committee

- ITH proposed a cultivation-based research project about composts and growing under lights **Decision: agreed** ***AP20/17: ITH to contact Colin Walker to initiate a research project about composts and growing under lights***

5.8 Publications

- TMA proposed reducing the price of 2020 BCSS calendars to £6 including postage, with copies made available free to Branches and Zones for promotional purposes **Decision:** agreed
- SMA asked whether there should be a 2021 calendar **Decision:** yes

5.9 Server

- the proposed meeting about taking the server offline did not happen ***AP20/18: BHI to consult Richard Keddie (aka RichT) about taking the server offline***

5.10 Technical Editor

- the Newsletter font in grey was not easy to read **Decision:** change font colour to black
- ITH thanked David Quail for his many years of service to the journal and asked AVB to pass this on ***AP20/19: AVB to thank David Quail for his many years of service to the journal***
- Swallowtail was now the sole printer after Warners out-priced themselves **Decision:** a second printer should be sought, possibly Lavenham, and the possibility of PUR binding could be investigated ***AP20/20: AVB to research members' preferences, perhaps at AGM, in respect of binding***
- back issues of journals would be available in the members' area of the new website as articles rather than complete journals

5.11 *Bradleya*

- ITH thanked GCH, who had resigned as *Bradleya* Editor, for his hard work and support
- publication of GCH's final edition would be in May
- George Thomson has been asked and was considering taking over as *Bradleya* Editor so long as he didn't need to become a Trustee and could use InDesign rather than QuarkExpress for layout **Decision:** agreed but quarterly reports would be required (via ALA or ITH)
- ITH proposed GCH remain a Trustee in the position of International Ambassador **Decision:** agreed

5.12 Vice-Chairman

- it was preferable for Branch copies of *The Simple Guide to Growing Cacti and Succulents* to be collected but they could be packed and mailed
- the promotional leaflets would be sent to all Branches and Zones (except Zone 12) but could not include a membership form for VAT reasons (existing membership forms should be used)

5.13 Convention

- SBA is leading the Convention working group, supported by GEV and Bill Darbon
- the date could be moved to April (potential clashes with marts, etc), May (recommended) or October (not good for plant sales) to avoid the hotel holiday season ***AP20/21: GEV to suggest a May date to SBA***
- Marriott's had provided a competitive offer that included double accommodation
- ITH was keen on three whole days for the event (rather than part days on Friday and Sunday) to allow sale of day tickets but GEV and BHI were concerned at the impact on those travelling greater distances and the potential need for an additional night's accommodation
- ITH suggested day tickets purchased for £25 (including a finger buffet) would pay for the venue while those attending all three days and staying at the Marriott would pay for their accommodation only
- the speakers would be funded by the Society
- other attractions would include plant sales and an auction

6. Electronic Decision Recording

6.1 All decisions covered under other headings.

7. Communications (including any award nominations)

7.1 EHA had received reports of a problem with recording PayPal payments and that no acknowledgements were being sent. BHI explained that the new website would fix this known issue.

7.2 Branches were reporting they lacked banners for events, although a number of pull-up banners had been produced by BHI a few years ago and should be being held by Zone Reps, suggesting local communication issues.

Decision: more and updated pull-up, table-top and outdoor feather banners were needed. ***AP20/22: ITH to liaise with BHI over production of new pull-up, table-top and outdoor feather banners.***

7.3 No award nominations had been received.

8. Accounting Report update

8.1 Nothing further to report.

9. National Show

9.1 No report had been received from the Shows Committee but Bill Darbon had offered to attend the meeting in place of BTI. The offer was declined by EHA.

9.2 There was concern that there had been no advertising for the National Show in *eNews*. GEV said he had received an article from Bill Darbon for the February edition.

9.3 There was also concern about promotion of the event generally. ITH said he would circulate the Shows Committee's press release to journalists he knew personally but would not be handling publicity as this was a Shows Committee function. **Decision:** it was agreed to co-opt Vanessa Ridge onto the Shows Committee to work with BTI on marketing the National Show. ***AP20/23: ITH to circulate Shows Committee's National Show press release to journalists he knows personally. AP20/24: BTI to work with Vanessa Ridge on promoting the National Show.***

10. Society AGM

10.1 EHA reported that the branded tablecloth used at the AGM was missing. **Decision:** a replacement would, in any case, be required to reflect the new Society logo and colours. ***AP20/4: ITH to procure a new branded tablecloth for the AGM.***

10.2 The only nominations that had been received were GEV for BCSS Secretary and SBA, SMA and Jo Adderley for Annual Trustees. There would, therefore, be no need for elections.

10.3 ITH requested a slot on the agenda to gain feedback from members. ***AP20/25: EHA to revise AGM agenda to include a short feedback session with ITH.***

11. Society website and server migration update

11.1 This item was discussed out of sequence during the morning session because DKI would not be present in the afternoon.

11.2 A subgroup consisting of GCH, GEV, BHI, TMA, SSN and ITH met in Newport Pagnell on 25th January to review the functionality of the new website database (minutes and action points attached). The key outcomes included:

- reporting functions to be taken offline using a 'data warehouse' approach of snapshots and dumps into a program such as Excel or Access
- a full suite of reports would be available from the database
- a professional Project Manager would be engaged to deliver the Statement of Requirements from Pedalo and manage the BCSS-Pedalo relationship, including a formal change log (cost using Encore Fellows expected to be £350 per day plus £1750 finder's fee, considerably less than the average of £600 per day) **Decision:** all outcomes agreed. ***APs: as per meeting (attached – with revisions)***

11.3 The reporting requirements of the BCSS and its officials would need to be identified. ***AP 20/26: SSN to prepare a baseline document of BCSS reporting requirements.***

11.4 A team would be needed to build up the content of the website in the house style. ***AP20/31: All trustees to consider possible candidates for providing and editing web content in the house style. A decision is needed on whether BHI or ALA leads on content. To be progressed at next meeting.***

12. Ideas for promoting the Society – Vanessa Ridge

12.1 Vanessa introduced herself and commented:

- she is a relatively new member who had found out about the BCSS during a visit to Southfields Nurseries and joined following a phone call to SMA.
- her first Branch meeting was appalling and cited parking problems, disabled access, rude officials, comfort and a poor welcome as major issues
- she attended CactusWorld Live at Lullingstone Castle and said this was a good event at a great venue that was well promoted but was critical of transport arrangements and costs
- as a regular Facebook poster she feels posts that start out intending to be positive become negative
- she perceives the Society and its meetings as old, established and closed to newcomers because they are not made to feel welcome

12.2 In spite of these problems, she saw many positives on which to build opportunities for improvement:

- there was growth and change was definitely occurring but more needed to be done quickly
- there were good events but longer planning periods (to allow working people to plan over a year ahead) and better promotion (eg, adverts in garden centres and leaflets at tills) were needed, along with better considerations of transport
- closer and better working with specialist societies, such as the Haworthia Society (where she was made to feel unwelcome) and the Mesemb Study Group would create a better overall experience
- Facebook showed people were involved but the environment was toxic, needing firmer control of posters, weeding of repetitive content (eg, plant identifications) and perhaps a members-only rule (plant identification could become a member benefit) to allow for better promotion of the Society and its events

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- competitions on Facebook and elsewhere were good for engaging people but could be used more frequently, especially at events
- Facebook pages could have endorsements for nurseries
- BCSS branded and endorsed products, eg growlights, subject to satisfactory specifications, would raise the profile (she had been in contact with a Chinese growlight company)
- there is a Calendar of Events on the website but it is very out of date with last year's events still displayed and very few of this year's appearing only at the bottom (at the time, after GEV endorsed this observation, ITH suggested there was a link to a 2020 events page but this is not the case as the link is to those few events at the bottom of the 2019 page)
- the BCSS should have prominent displays at the big RHS events and flower shows
- the National Show was apparently a major event only a few months away but no information was available on table costs, the identities of sellers, transport or other attractions
- ordinary members could shadow Trustees to gain an understanding and provide feedback
- nurseries and garden centres could be offered corporate membership

12.3 BHI explained the BCSS was a charity with an educational remit and said he was not prepared to shut down non-member areas.

12.4 SSN suggested a sub-committee could be formed to explore ways of better using social media. This would be considered for the future.

12.5 ITH said some BCSS Branches and Zones did attend RHS events but that some of these attempts were more successful than others.

12.6 ITH thanked Vanessa for coming and asked her if she would produce a list of areas for potential improvement, especially in respect of promoting the Society. Vanessa said she would do this.

13. Plant Regulations

13.1 Plant Health: BHI reported there were now potential errors in the information issued by APHA, who had gone back to DEFRA for clarification on certain issues, including the impact of the Regulations on hobbyists. Dialogue could not continue until these issues were resolved by DEFRA. In the meantime ITH has asked Jane Perrone to question officials about the regulations when she interviews them for her podcast. ***AP20/27: BHI to continue liaising with APHA over Plant Health Regulations.***

13.2 JAR was trying to identify the right person within DEFRA to clarify the regulations in respect of CITES Appx 1 plants but was hopeful of an answer shortly. ITH has formally requested a view from the RHS regarding the way they handle CITES Appx 1 plants displayed by nurseries and exhibitors at their shows ***AP20/28: JAR to liaise with DEFRA over CITES Appx 1 plants.***

14. Future publications

14.1 There was a possibility of a joint publication with the Alpine Garden Society. ITH had put Paul Spracklin in touch with them.

15. Cyprus society liaison

15.1 Nothing to report

16. Any other business

16.1 Colin Walker has suggested a new Presidential chain as the current one has the old logo. ***AP20/29: ITH to ask Colin Walker to research honorarial chains and obtain a quote.***

16.2 SMA reported that 12 Branches do not have their 2020 programme on the websites (two Branches still had 2018 programmes) and nine Branches were still using the old logo. Teesside has a deceased contact point. **Decision:** the Branches would be taken off the server if their websites were not updated by the end of February. ***AP30: SMA to chase Branches to update their websites by 29th February and advise them they will be taken off server if they do not.***

16.3 GCH apologised that the Cactus Explorers' Weekend could only take place on 21st-23rd August, which unfortunately clashed with a BoT meeting. **Decision:** as a number of Trustees attend the Cactus Explorers' Weekend, the BoT date would be moved. ***AP31: GEV to liaise with Trustees and Holiday Inn to arrange an alternative date for the third BoT meeting.***

16.4 Date of next meeting: **23 May 2020 (11:00am, Holiday Inn, Newport Pagnell)**

There being no further business, ITH closed the meeting at 4:35pm.