

Biodynamic Association AGM

Minutes

Saturday 10th October 2020 (by zoom)



Present: BDA Staff: Gabriel Kaye (Executive Director), Stuart Cragg (Cert Manager), Richard Swann (Cert & Editor of Star & Furrow) Nina de Winter (Marketing and Supply Chain Manager) Paul Rainger (Director of Communications and Fundraising)

Trustees: Julia Wright (Chair), Odilia Kirst, Spencer Christy, Judy Foster, Jenni Rosenbrock, Hannah Steenbergen, Ian Bailey

Members & other guests: Alysoun Bolger, Michelle Boon, Peter Brinch, Lynda Brown, Nigel Burton, Alison Chapman, John Chapman, Elaine Cheong, Suzi Cumiskey, Douglas Davidson, Martin G Peck, Gareth Goode, Kim Goode, Vivian Griffiths, Barbara Jones, Jeremy Kent, Hans-Gunther Kern, Lone Kruse Jensen, Hannah Malinkrodt-Robson, Charles Mitchell, Mark Moodie, Ian Nicholson, Teo Nasar, Mari-Liis Nukis, Marina O'Connell, Andrew Rawnsley, Darshan Robson, Dapinder Singh, Amarjit Singh, Hans Steenbergen, Andre Tranquilini, Julie Yardley, Briony Young, Marjatta von Boeschoten, Lucas Shoemaker

Apologies: Christophe Dale, Jessica Standing (Office Manager), Rosemary Tetley, Duncan Ross, Joanna May, Jo Bradley and the East Midlands BD Group Team, Marilyn Sansom, Flora Stubbs, Jackie, Lawrence and Karen from Whole Health Agriculture

Welcome and introduction - Gabriel Kaye - welcomed everyone to the AGM and introduced the needs of the technology for participation.

A minute of thought was held for Tyll van der Voort who crossed the threshold yesterday (9th October 2020). He was a founder of Oaklands Park Camphill Community and an artist. He received a Lifetime Achievement Award for his biodynamic work in 2014. He held Biodynamics in Oaklands Park and Severn Valley for many years.

Minutes of 69th AGM 2019 at Glasshouse College, Wollaston Rd, Stourbridge

Proposed: Richard Swann, Seconded: Spencer Christy. These were approved and signed.

Chair's Address – Julia Wright - Thanks

- Julia began by expressing warmest thanks to all those who have supported the work of the BDA over the past year, and also those who have practised and promoted biodynamic farming and food in general.
- She went on to thank everyone who had kindly made donations including our members, William Howard and Audrey Salisbury-Smith for their very generous legacies, The Seed Cooperative, Newton Dee Camphill Community, Dewcross centre for Moral Technology, Weleda, Lots Road Auctions, The Hermes Trust (in support of Instagram work), Lady Cawdor, Mr and Mrs Oppenheimer, The Ruskin Mill Trust (access to the Field Centre, training, etc.).
- Thanks to the departing Trustees – Roberto, Mari-Liis and Chris for their wonderful contributions; She also thanked Lynda Brown for representing BD in the national policy arena; the current trustees Ian Bailey (Deputy-Chair), Odilia Kirst, Spencer Christy, Andre Tranquilini, Judy Foster, Jenni Rosenbrock (BD Agricultural College link), and Patrick Holden (Patron and ongoing support).
- Thanks to the preparation makers – Briony Young and Bernard Jarman and the prep group, and to Hawkwood College for allowing storage.
- Thanks also to all the staff who run the whole show and to Gabriel Kaye as Executive Director, to Jess Standing for adapting so readily to the expanding team, to Richard Swann for the fantastic Star and Furrow magazines, Paul Rainger for his work with social media and

fundraising, to Nina de Winter for her marketing and supply chain work, branding and promoting, Lynda Brown for her work with the BD Gardening Club, Jo Hussey for book keeping, Isla Pearson for Membership admin support, Stuart Cragg as Director of BD certification, and to Margaret, Jessie, Alysoun and Richard as Cert. team.

Crisis Presents Opportunity - Build Back Better

Julia began by talking about the increased importance of local food and farming and that during lockdown farmers are now considered keyworkers.

We have a 5-year strategy with strategic objectives:

- 1. Making biodynamics more accessible to more people**
 - BDA and Gardening Club membership is up 38%
 - Sales of preparations and books have risen 30% January to October
 - Seed demand at the Seed Co-operative rose 800% in March/April
 - Social media – total new community rose by 120% April – June
 - Individual producers and processors reported exponential rise in demand
 - BD staff rose to the challenge
- 2. Engaging and sustaining new and existing biodynamic supporters**
 - The 2019 conference on Health, Harmony and Holism at Glasshouse College had 110 participants
 - The Biodynamic Gardening Club hit the ground running with over 300 paying members in the first 18 months
 - Star and Furrow continues strongly with its back catalogue now digitised, quarterly newsletters and Biodynamic Buzz
 - Growth in social media impact (funded by GIF, Hermes). Social media help us achieve our mission by reaching out and engaging with many more people beyond just our membership alone. There was a surge in growth across all channels, but especially Instagram
- 3. Expanding and strengthening the biodynamic food network from producer to consumer**
 - Sales and distribution of books and preparations increased by approx. 20% overall to March 2020
 - Continued gardening courses: Step-by-Step with six Ruskin Mill Trust centres, also courses in Berkshire, Devon, Herefordshire, Cardiff and Kent (till March 2020)
 - New BD cereals learning group on WhatsApp
 - Development of the marketing and supply chain network, including new website
- 4. Consolidating the biodynamic movement's position as a pioneer, partner and influencer**
 - Continued participation in the English Organic Forum, preparing for the Environmental Land Management scheme (ELMs)
 - Completed and disseminating research project on the viability and sustainability of BD farms with case studies of Loves Lane, Nantclyd, Plaw Hatch and Yatesbury farms with CAWR-CU and RAU, funded by the Anthroposophical Society GB
 - Positive press on biodynamics in The Guardian and Farmers Weekly
 - Presentation and stands at national events: Oxford Real Farming Conference January 2020 and Hawkwood College Seed Festival July 2020
 - Internationally: participation in the International Biodynamic Agriculture Conference on Finding the Spirit in Agriculture at Dornach, Switzerland in February 2020. Active roles in the new International Federation Demeter International entity, on the Standards, the Accreditation, and the Advisory, Research and Training committees
- 5. Nurturing and sustaining the biodynamic organisational network and its people in the UK**
 - Staffing: reaping the benefits of our new Marketing and Supply Chain Manager, Nina de Winter
 - Collaboration with Ruskin Mill Trust over staff training (Goethean Science Course) and an exploration of the genius loci of the biodynamic movement in the UK
 - Staff training: Insights training for staff and team awareness
 - Regular biodynamic whole movement meetings for synergistic collaboration, with the Biodynamic Agricultural College (BDAC), BD Cert, the Board of Studies (BoS), the Seed Co-operative and the Biodynamic Land Trust

Julia explained a diagram showing the whole of the BD movement in the UK and how the different organisations link together.

Crisis brings huge opportunities if we are agile in response to events

- Surge in interest for: seeds, preps, information, gardening, local food supplies, health, BD farmers
- Issues: climate change, veganism, diversity and inclusivity
- Context: COVID, Brexit (and US trade talks), financial downturn

We are:

- Monitoring extra-ordinary risks
- Ensuring we have financial reserves and revising our business plan
- Preparing for increased demand by:
 - Continued investment in Gardening Club and supply chain development
 - Evaluation and ramping up of training and education
 - Investing in the Seed Co-operative's growth phase
 - Creating a new BD farm support and services post

We are proud to be hosting the 2nd international BD research conference in the UK (thanks to Richard Swann). Save the date! 30 August – 2nd September 2021 at the Royal Agricultural University in Cirencester

Certification Report- Stuart Cragg

Stuart began by thanking everyone who has supported him in becoming established in his role.

- We are the only BD certifier which also does organic certification and are trying to draw attention to this with consumers
- Currently there are 277 licences, split roughly 50/50 organic and biodynamic
- A lot of recent interest from processors and traders; the team has been very responsive in dealing with enquiries
- Brexit transition still ongoing with wholesale changes and uncertainty in farming and trading beginning to bite with most of the mechanisms not yet in place and labelling requirements unknown
- Regulation of organics may alter because it has been adopted into UK law, but Demeter is international and will remain the same
- Needs: education and training for farmers and growers; advisory service

Biodynamic Gardening Club – Lynda Brown

Primarily for home gardeners, free for BDA members and £15.00 pa for non-members

- Own e-mag, BD vine, own resource library, run events and webinars (including one on gene editing on 22nd October), Facebook group
- Lynda thanked the four supporting partners, Weleda, Waltham Place, Greencuisine Trust and Wholistic Life which give the BD Gardening Club the broadest range of expertise of any gardening club.
- Our mission is to enable as many people as possible to engage with the biodynamic approach to gardening in ways that help save the planet, combat climate change and promote long-lasting positive health.
- Achievements: 315 paid members bringing in £4725, achieving BDA's core objectives, over 10,000 views of videos on You Tube, arrival of DK BD gardening book reprint with gardening club sticker, scheduled to feature on Gardeners' World, event planned with Charles Dowding, fuelled increase in sales of preparations and books, increased awareness of biodynamics.
- For next year: aiming for 500 members, grassroots initiatives including an urban outreach pilot as well as member experiments and experiences, and buddying.

Build back better: the BDA covers both farmers and gardeners, and joining the gardening club automatically links people to farming and food. With over 27 million gardeners in the UK there is more land in gardens than in nature reserves. The view of gardening as just a hobby is changing.

Lynda thanked everyone for their support.

Marketing Report – Nina de Winter

Nina explained her role in connecting the certification licensees and the BDA, raising awareness of biodynamic and organic certification of food to increase demand.

Five highlights: An interim consumer-friendly website and social media; a new user-friendly directory with may and social media details; partnerships with FTFU, Who Feed Us collective, Pharmacy, Wherefrom, Todelli and Regen Ag; the supply chain – specific needs, licensee products, introductions, connections, networking; BDFI – involved in the international marketing committee and campaign materials.

Move to reenergise the Demeter brand with the 'You Will Grow' campaign. *'Branding adds spirit and soul to what would otherwise be a robotic, automated, generic price-value proposition.'* David Aaker.

Four goals for the next year: branding, an awareness campaign, supply chain development, network building and exposure.

Biodynamic Federation Demeter International – Alysoun Bolger

This is a federation of Demeter International and the International Biodynamic Association. Together, the organisation is worldwide. Alysoun showed diagrams of the structure of the new amalgamated organisation, as well as the internal committees and their focus. Committees focus on trademarking; international marketing; accreditation; standards; lobbying and public relations; advisory, research and training; international certification; membership.

The BDFI member organisations which are Demeter certifiers and biodynamic associations work with the Agriculture Section internationally and with individuals who work with biodynamics and anthroposophy.

Finance Report – Gabriel Kaye

The BDA has recently had several legacies, and in 2019 – 2020 this continued with legacies in particular from Audrey Salisbury Smith and William Howard. Gabriel expressed her gratitude to these and other people who have remembered Biodynamics in their Will.

Income and expenditure have both increased each year for several years. 2019 – 2020 was a particularly good year owing to high levels of donations, allowing increased activity as well as additional reserves to ensure continuity of staff and activity over the next year. The positive excess for 2020 is nearly £64,000 and the increase in spending was £10,000 because of increased staffing and activity. Investment value of the reserves fund fell in March owing to the pandemic but is rising again.

The main charitable income comes from donations, legacies, grants, memberships, and the sale of books and preparations. Interest from GKK and other fund investments is over £10,000 for the year. The conference last year was able to run on a budget of £12,150 because of sponsorship of the venue by Ruskin Mill Trust.

Certification runs its own budget with a small surplus which helps to support the charity, and there is also a 'grant' from DEFRA. Thanks to all those licensees who are paying Certification's marketing fee which is specifically for marketing development. This has raised some £15,000 and is invested in the new marketing post and activity (this activity also uses charitable income).

The expenditure chart shows how the income to the BDA is spent on different activities and needs; some funds are restricted to specific areas. Support costs / management are the biggest cost for the BDA, containing most of the staffing costs. Gardening and Marketing staff are on self-employed contracts so come under 'projects'. Books and preparations form a large part of our activity; thanks go to Ian Bailey for giving his time for free and helping to keep costs down, and also to Jess Standing. Publications for members form a large part of the cost of membership. The conference broke even when the bursary funds are added in.

Certification runs its own expenses covering staffing, contracted inspectors, UKAS audit costs, and running the activity. BDA Governance is an ongoing annual cost, and is stable.

At end March 2020 our cash in bank was twice the previous year at over £200,000. This includes reserves from the legacies to help carry us through the next couple of years.

We have an excellent bookkeeper who works with the Executive Director and Trustee Treasurer to manage our budgets and funds prudently while making the most of what we have for the present and future of biodynamics in line with our stated strategic aims. Our next challenge is to find higher levels of funding on a more regular basis so as to sustain this level of activity.

For the full annual account, please see BDA website: <https://biodynamic.org.uk/about/#annual-reports>

Accounts proposed: Spencer C, Seconded: Ian Bailey - carried

Our accountants, Andorran in Cheltenham, do a good job this year and we'd like to continue with them.

Proposed: Julia W, Seconded: Ian Bailey - carried

Election of Trustees – Gabriel Kaye

Three trustees are stepping down:

Chris Stockdale is stepping down after many years as a trustee and Chair of the BDA Council of for 5 years and several terms and we thank him for his dedication, loyalty, service to biodynamics and his persistence.

Roberto Romano as a young father working at Ruskin Mill, Clervaux, Darlington, he has completed one term and brought a fresh view and dedication to this role.

Mari-Liis Nukin stepped up to the challenge of becoming a trustee as a young BD apprentice at Asha. She is moving on to pastures new having fully embraced trusteeship of a charity.

We thank them all for all the help and support they have offered the BDA and biodynamics in general.

Standing for re-election after three years as a trustee is **Hannah Steenbergen**. **Jenni Rosenbrock** and **Judy Foster** have both been working with us for the past few months as co-opted trustees and stand for election. **Elaine Cheong**, **Hannah Malinkrodt-Robson** and **Teo Nasar** are all new candidates. We also need to confirm the re-election of Spencer Christie, Odilia Kirst and Julia Wright who were missed off the last AGM while attention was on the conference that day.

Hannah S - Proposed: Spencer Christy, Seconded: Julia Wright - carried

Jenni - Proposed: Barbara Jones, Seconded: Hannah Steenbergen - carried

Judy - Proposed: Julia Wright, Seconded: Spencer Christy - carried

Elaine - Proposed: Lynda Brown, Seconded: Hannah Malinkrodt-Robson - carried

Hannah R - Proposed: Spencer Christy, Seconded: Julia Wright - carried

Teo - Proposed: Mari-Liis Nukis, Seconded: Spencer Christy - carried

Spencer, Odilia, Julia - Proposed: Martin Peck, Seconded: Hans Steenbergen - carried

Questions

Working with schools was discussed with some examples of successful schemes across the country.

This closed the AGM.