

# Proposed changes to the Constitution of BDA

## more information for AGM 2021

### 1. Proposal to add a possible third term election for trustees

Proposed by Gabriel Kaye as Executive Director and as proposed to the Council of Trustees and as agreed at the Council meeting of 18<sup>th</sup> June 2021

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**Rationale:** Trustees are first elected for a term of three years, after which time other aspects of life often call them away. A number of trustees are willing to stand for a second term which adds expertise, understanding and continuity to the Council of Trustees. Giving the possibility for a third term, whilst not common, enables further longevity of institutional memory and helps to bring balance to the board where the majority are in their first term. This extra term can make all the difference to the stability of the BDA in its path forward.

### 2. Proposal to add the Object of 'Research' to the Constitution of the BDA

Proposed by Julia Wright, Chair of Council and Associate Professor at Coventry University, by agreement of the Council of Trustees and as agreed at the Council meeting of 18<sup>th</sup> June 2021

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#### **The context**

Research has played an important role in the development of biodynamics since the Agriculture Course given by Rudolf Steiner in 1924. Steiner insisted at the time that the ideas he presented should all be tested experimentally. This was initially done in conjunction with the Natural Science Section in Dornach, Switzerland, as well as the setting up of the first Agricultural Experimental Circle that over its first 15 years attracted about 800 members from around the world. Rudolf Steiner recognised the value of establishing a modern scientific basis for his work.

In the UK, biodynamic research has been relatively little developed and there is no dedicated biodynamic research organisation. There is a small UK Experimental Circle Group which is a key part of the activity of Agriculture Section in the UK and has met most years since 1928. It meets once a year and publishes the notes of its meetings to those interested. It is not officially associated with the BDA but is of course associated. This Circle is open to new members.

In spite of not having a dedicated organisation for research in the UK the BDA maintains a keen interest and holds a collection of research papers and resources. The Biodynamic Agricultural College (BDAC) and BD Certification activities also maintain active interest in research issues, developing practice and approaches. Several individuals in the UK also undertake informal research, perhaps most notably Mark Moodie who runs an interactive website <https://www.considera.org/> and the Field Centre at Ruskin Mill also carries out some biodynamic-related research, <https://thefieldcentre.org.uk/>. Research collected on the BDA website can be found at <https://www.biodynamic.org.uk/discover/biodynamic-research/> .

Patrick Holden, Chief Executive of the Sustainable Food Trust and Patron of the BDA, gave a rousing Opening Speech at the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Biodynamic Research Conference on August 30<sup>th</sup> 2021, where he outlined what he felt were the agendas for biodynamic research going forward. For the mainstream farming sector and audience, Patrick emphasised the need for research that Steiner had already set the groundwork for, on the link between epigenetics, farming practices and the vitality and nutrient density of foodstuffs (including on nutrition per hectare), and, on the other hand, on the shortcomings of modern breeding systems. Research on appropriate methods and mechanisms for seed saving was also required, as was the development of new metrics that captured the finer impacts of certain practices including at an energetic level and in relation to human health. Then within the biodynamic movement itself, Patrick saw other specific research needs around validating and legitimising the influence of the planetary bodies on the development of plants as well as the impacts of the biodynamic preparations and how they could be taken to the next level. Within this, he stressed that the universal laws and principles needed to be taken out of the esoteric world and into the 'real world'. Overall Patrick envisaged a global network of cultural-spiritual-educational farms for learning, inspired by Steiner's impetus. This, he believed, would help people to understand the 'why' of Steiner's teachings, and thus would help to prevent the biodynamic message from being diluted as it became more mainstream.

## The Proposal

The current object of the CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organisation) *is to develop, promote and disseminate knowledge of the biodynamic methods inaugurated by Dr Rudolf Steiner for the betterment of farming, forestry and gardening.*

The proposal is to insert a strategic research function into the Constitution of the BDA, as follows:

The Object of the CIO *is to research, educate and promote knowledge of the Biodynamic concepts and methods initiated by Dr Rudolf Steiner for the betterment of farming, forestry and gardening.*

## The reasons for this are as follows:

1. The biodynamic methods are not fully developed but are constant works in progress. Steiner himself said what he gave were hints or 'indications' that should be investigated and developed further, by both farmers and in collaboration with researchers.
2. A major Unique Selling Point of biodynamics is that research and experimental circles were established for biodynamic farmers and researchers in the 1920s, far earlier than any other models (e.g. The FAO of the UN established Farmer Field

Schools in the 1990s, and the Soil Association established the participatory 'Innovative Farmers' model in the 2000s.)

3. Steiner proposed a holistic research methodology (Goethean or phenomenological enquiry) that would complement (and overcome the shortcomings of) the contemporary Western reductionist scientific approach.
4. The Constitution already states 'to develop knowledge', which implies research although this has not yet been so clearly articulated.
5. Unless research is brought into consciousness and clearly stated it is unlikely to happen (as per the previous decades) or receive support.
6. The current Constitution states the Object 'for the betterment of farming, forestry and gardening' yet we do not currently measure whether and how these improvements happen, this would require research.
7. Undertaking research emphasises the dynamic movement and process of 'biological-dynamic agriculture'.
8. Without a process of research and enquiry, of questioning, biodynamic information remains 'in-formation'.
9. It is more interesting for engaged citizens to be part of a dynamic process of enquiry, rather than being simple recipients of information.
10. The research or enquiry process vital to sustainable food production for continuous adaptation to externalities.
11. The research or enquiry process is also about the farmer and the farm co-evolving, being on a co-evolutionary journey of discovery or exploration.
12. A clearly stated research object holds the potential to attract more funding and collaboration opportunities both within the UK and across Europe and internationally.
13. There are critical societal issues that biodynamic farming can make a direct and unique contribution to, including around human health and vitality, yet to date there is insufficient evidence of this.

## FAQs:

### **Q. What would be the aim of the research?**

The aim of a Biodynamic Research Initiative or strategy would be to enable the development and growth of biodynamic research in the UK as well as amongst European and global partners and networks. This would be twofold: to generate new knowledge on the practice and benefits of biodynamics, and to support biodynamic growers on their co-evolutionary journey of enquiry with their farms/gardens/nature.

### **Q. Would the BDA need to develop a research strategy?**

The BDA already has a (dormant) research strategy, developed around 2018, and this would be revised and updated according to the business plan.

### **Q. What do we mean by research?**

Research may involve the natural or social sciences, e.g. analysis of crop yields or of assessing the impact of community farms, and/or the arts and humanities e.g. historical or anthropological research. Research can also include the reviewing of existing research data,

for example there is substantial research existing in the German language that requires translating into English.

In addition there are other ongoing activities that research would feed into. For example, biodynamic education can include a component on how to organise a process of individual research enquiry for the grower.

**Q. How much would this cost the BDA and would it put a strain on resources?**

A research strategy would include a budget that would need fundraising for. There are many ways to drive research forward. Developing collaborative research partnerships with larger/other organisations is one way to acquire funding. Coordinating and supporting growers' experiments and individual research enquiry requires more human resource input than financial. All this would need to be properly planned